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Makes 5700 in 24
Days in Radio
"Thanks to your interesting Course I made over \$700
in 24 days in Radio. Of
the average but I run from
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ROBERT JACQUOT,
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"Use my name as a reference and depend on me as a booster. The biggest thing I ever did was answer your advertisement. I am averaging better than \$500 a month from my own busi-sis a week."

A. SCHRECK, Phoenix, Ariz.

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Pay Raised 15e%
'I was a dumbbell in electricity until 1 got in touch
with you Mr. Cooke, but
now I have charge of a big
plant including 600 motors and
direct a force of 54 men—elecary has cose up more than
100%."

GEORGE ILLINGWORTH.

I Will Train You at Home to fill

It's a shame for you to earn \$15 or \$20 or \$30 a week, when in the same six days as an Electrical Expert you could make \$70 to \$200 and do it easier—not work half so hard. Why then remain in the small-pay game, in a line of work that offers no chance, no big promotion, no big income? Fit yourself for a real job in the great electrical industry.

I'll show you how.



Be an Electrical Experi Earn \$3,500 to \$10,000 a Year

Today even the ordinary Electrician—the "screw driver" kind—is maing money—big money. But it's the trained man—the man who knows the whys and wherefores of Electricity—the Electricial Expert—who is picked out to "boss" the ordinary Electricians—to boss the Big Jobs—the jobs that pay \$3,500 to \$10,000 a Year, Get in line for one of these "Big Jobs." Start by enrolling now for my easily learned, quickly grasped, right-up-to-the-minute, Spare-Time Home-Study Course in Practical Electricity.

Age or Lack of Experience No Drawback

You don't have to be a College Man; you don't have to be a High School Graduate. As Chief Engineer of the Chicago Engineering Works, I know exactly the kind of training you need and I will give you that training. My Course in Electricity is simple, thorough and complete and offers every ough and complete and offers every man, regardless of age, education or previous experience, the chance to become, in a very short time, an "Electrical Expert," able to make from \$70 to \$200 a week,

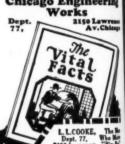
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With me, you do practical work—at home. You start right in after your first few lessons to work at your profession in the regular way and make tession in the regular way and make extra money in your spare time. For this you need tools, and I give them to you—5 big complete working outfits, with tools, measuring instruments and a real elec-MAIL

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JACK WARD Chicago

"I didn't want to work for small pay. Easily proved Mr. Greenslade was right—over \$1,000 every month last year."



"After 10 years in the railway mail service I decided to make a change. Earned more than \$1,000 the first 30 days."



P. WYNN Portland

"Last week earnings amounted to \$554.37; this week will go over \$400. Thanks to



CHARLES V. CHAMPION. Illinois

I'm now President, and my earnings for 1925 will easily exceed the five figure mark thanks to your

You're Fooling Yourself

-if You Think These Big Pay Records Are Due to LUCK!

But don't take my word for it! When I tell you that you can quickly increase your earning power; I'LL PROVE IT! FREE! I'll show you hundreds of men like yourself who have done it. And I'll show you how you can do it, too.

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"LL come directly to the point. First you'll say, "I could never do it: These men were lucky." But remember the men whose pictures are shown above are only four out of thousands and if you think it's luck that has suddenly raised thousands of men into the big pay class you're feeling yourself!

Easy to Increase Pay

But let's get down to your own case. You want more more. You want the good things in life, a comfortable home of your own where you can entertain, a snappy car, membership in a good club, good clothes, advantages for your loved ones, travel and a place of importance in your community. All this can be yours. And I'll prove it to you, Free.

First of all get this one thing right; such achievement is not luck—it's KNOWING HOW! And KNOWING HOW in a field in which your opportunities and rewards are ten times greater than in other work. In short, I'll prove that I can make you a Master Salesman-and you know the in-

I can make you a maker Sateman—and you know the in-comes good salesmen make.

Every one of the four men shown above was sure that he could never NFLL! They thought Salesmen were "born" and not "made"!

When I said, "Enter the Selling Field where chances in When I said, "Enter the Selling Field where chances in your favor are ten to one," they said it couldn't be done, but I proved to them that this Association could take any set I proved to them that this Association could take any man of average intelligences, regardless of his lack of selling experience—and in a short time smalless MASTER SALESMAN of his—make him capable of earning anywhere from 65,000 to 19,000 a year. And that's what I'm willing to prove to you, KREE.

Simple as A. B. C.

Yes may think my promise remarkable. Yet there is solding remarkable about it. Salestmanship is governed by rules and laws. There are certain ways of saying and delag things, certain ways of approaching a prospect to get its andivided attention, certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudice and outwit competition. Jost as you tearned the alphabet, so you can learn salestmanshin. And through the NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION of Salesman exclusive feature of the M. S. C. A. System of Salesman continues feature of the M. S. C. A. System of Salesman continues are supported by the studying.

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able book. "Modern Salesmanship." It will show you how you can easily become a Master Rieman, a big money-maker—how the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training will give you years of selling experience in a few weeks; how our FREE Employment Service will help select and secure a good selling position when you are qualified and ready. And it will give you successing a substant of the selection of the selecti

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Oct. 1925

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Single Copies, Twenty-five Cents Yearly Subscription, \$2.50

Monthly publication issued by Ainslee's Magazine Co., Seventh Archue and Fifteenth Street, New York. Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, Vice President and Treasurer; George C. Smith, Fr., Vice President; Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, President; Ormond G. Smith, President; George C. Smith, President; Ormond V. Gould, Secretary, 78-98 Seventh Avenue, New York City. Copyright, 1925, by Ainslee's Magazine Co., Great Britain. All Rights Reserved. Publishers verywhere are cathered and the Company of the contents of this magazine either wholly or in part. Entered as Second-class Matter, September 11, 1902, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Camadian Subscripted Subscription, \$2.56. Foreign, \$4.22.

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Those who stopped outside to listen did not know he was playing her accompaniment without touching the keys!

Ithappened at the Drake Hotel, Chicago, during the National Music Convention in June

And now anyone—without previous training—can play roll music with the same control of Keys—the same Personal Touch that a pianist has in playing by hand

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You can play a piano solo correctly, accenting the melody or the chords. You can play dance music in perfect time and rhythm.

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GOOD READING

BY

CHARLES HOUSTON



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In America the development of largecirculation fiction magazines has long made it possible for dwellers even in the most remote hamlets to satisfy the universal love for fiction that girdles the world. Everywhere men and women find escape from the harassments and worries of life by listening at the feet of story-tellers.

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Here are thumb-nail reviews of some of the latest "CH" offerings, but get the complete list for yourself to learn what a treasure-trove is at your command.



THE GOLDEN BOWL, by Harrison Conran, published by Chelsea House, 79 Sevent Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

Into a land where mountain ranges flates out into hummocks on the tawny sands, the great desert country of the West, go two use in search of the treasure of the Golden Bord. Adventures await them on every hand. There is a fight ahead for the treasure, a beautiful girl, and for honor as well. Mr. Contail makes you feel the terrible sufferings of the men as they stagger along in search of the Bowl, makes you share with them their disappointments and final triumphs. No love of real Western stories can afford not to have this book in his library.



THE SPIDER'S DEN, by Johnston McCulls, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

When good-looking John Warwick, popular young society man and athlete, saw the gift drop her gold mesh bag and beckon him to follow her, he hesitated to fall for so obvious a ruse. But something compelled him to accept that challenge, and soon he was in the midst of the most thrilling adventures of all his colorful career. How he got into

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(Continued on 2nd page following.)



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the Spider's Den—and out—what befell him there, makes as baffling a detective story as we have read this year. See if you do not agree with us when you are more than a quarter way through the book.



H ER DESERT LOVER, by Louisa Carter Lee, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

She came stumbling through the storm into that quiet home of refinement. She could not gasp out her name. She was unknown, a woman of mystery. And what her coming did to change the life of that home! The fast-moving adventures that ensued are put down in wonderfully compelling style by the talented author of this love story. There's a glamour and romance about the book that hold your interest to the very end.



W HOSE MILLIONS? by Joseph Montague, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

Millions gone begging! No heir to the Heathcote fortune of \$20,000,000! With such an unusual situation, Mr. Montague opens his book with a rush and go that carries the reader on through the search for the missing heir, the struggle with a daring band of thieves, the final victory. You'll not forget this book in a hurry. It is an outstanding example of the story-teller's art.



O BJECT: ADVENTURE, by Ray Courtney, published by Chelsea House, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York City, Price 75c.

Kent McGregor was frankly out for the

thrills of Western life and his advertisement was headed with the title of this book. We are here to say that Kent's craving was more than satisfied and that he had adventures galore. He found that the O. B. Davis, his new employer on whose ranch he was to work, was a very good-looking young woman, and he found a number of other things in and about that ranch not quite so attractive, but all giving him his fill of adventure.



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W. HILE the books reviewed above are all popular, 75-cent copyright novels bearing the famous "CH" brand on their jackets, the lover of fiction must not forget that Chelsea House publishes attractive two-dollar books as well. For example—

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Mr. Beale has taken a land of epic grandeur for his background, the Great Canadian Northeast, and with the sound of surf thundering all through his pages he has painted an unforgetable picture of the lives of the simple fisher folk. These fine French-Canadians come alive in this book. We read with sympathy and understanding about their adventures and romances and wild loves. Mr. Beale has done a masterpiece, a book that is bound to live.





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OCTOBER, 1925.

No. 2



No Hero

By E. W. Hornung Author of "The Amateur Cracksman." "Rafflea." etc.

And I-what I seem to my friend, you see; What I soon shall seem to his love, you

What I seem to myself, do you ask of me? No hero, I confess.

CHAPTER I.

AS no writer ever dealt with the dramatic aspect of the unopened envelope? I cannot recall such a passage in any of my authors, and yet to my mind there is much matter for philosophy in what is always the expressionless shell of a boundless possibility. Your friend may run after you in the street, and you know at a glance whether his news is to be good, bad, or indifferent; but in his handwriting on the breakfast table there is never a hint as to the nature of his communication. Whether he has sustained a loss or an addition to his family, whether he wants you to dine with him at the club or to lend him ten pounds, his handwriting at least will be the same, unless, indeed, he be offended, when he will generally indite your name with a studious precision and a distinct grace quite foreign to his ordinary caligraphy.

These reflections, trite enough, as I know, are nevertheless inevitable, if one is to begin one's heroic story in the modern manner, at the latest possible point. That is clearly the point at which a waiter brought me the fatal letter from Catherine Evers. Apart even from its immediate consequences, the letter had a prima-facie interest, of no ordinary kind, as the first for years from a onceconstant correspondent. And so I sat studying the envelope with a curiosity too piquant not to be enjoyed. What in the world could so obsolete a friend

find to say to one now?

Catherine's handwriting was still stimulating-if, indeed, I ever found it more so in the foolish past. It had not altered in the least. There was the same sweet pedantry of the Attic e, the same superiority to the most venial abbreviation, the same inconsistent forest of exclamatory notes, thick as poplars across the Channel. The present plantation started after my own Christian name, to wit, "Dear Duncan!" there was nothing Germanic in Catherine's ancestry. It was only her apologetic little way of addressing me, as though nothing had ever happened, of asking whether she might. Her own tact and charm were in the tentative burial of the past. In the first line she had all but won my entire forgiveness; but the very next interfered with the effect.

You promised to do anything for me!

I should be sorry to deny it, I am sure, for not to this day do I know what I did say on the occasion to which she evidently referred. But was it kind to break the silence of years with such a reference? Was it even quite decent in Catherine to ignore my existence until I could be of use to her, and then to ask the favor in her first breath? It was true, as she went on to remind me, that we were more or less connected, after all, and at least conceivable that no one else could help her as I could, if I would. In any case, it was a certain satisfaction to hear that Catherine herself was of the last opinion. I read on. She was in a difficulty, but she did not say what the difficulty was. For one unworthy moment the thought of money entered my mind, to be ejected the next, as the Catherine of old came more and more into the mental focus. Pride was the last thing in which I had found her wanting, and her letter indicated no change in that respect.

"You may wonder," she wrote just at the end, "why I have never sent you a single word of inquiry, or sympathy, or congratulation! Well—suppose it was a quarrel when you went away! Mind, I never meant to quarrel, but, suppose I did, could I treat the dear old you like that, and the Great New You like somebody else? You have your own fame to thank for my unkindness! I am only thankful they haven't given you the V. C.! Then, I should never have dared, even now!"

Catherine wrote from the old address in Elm Park Gardens, and she wanted me to call as early as I could, or to make any appointment I liked. I, therefore, telegraphed that I was coming at three o'clock that afternoon, and thus made for myself one of the longest mornings that I can remember spending in town. I was staying at the time at the Kensington Palace Hotel, to be out of the central racket of things, and yet more

or less under the eye of the surgeon, who still hoped to extract the last bullet in time. I can remember spending half the morning gazing aimlessly over the grand old trees, already prematurely bronzed, and the other half in limping in their shadow to the Round Pond, where a few little town-ridden boys were sailing their humble craft. It was near the middle of August, and for the first time I was thankful that an earlier migration had not been feasible in my case.

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Mrs. Evers was not at home when I arrived, despite my telegram, but she had left a message which more than explained matters. She was lunching out, but only in Brechin Place, and I was to wait in the study, if I did not mind. I did not, and yet I did, for the room in which Catherine certainly read her books and wrote her letters was also the scene of that which I was beginning to find it rather hard work to forget. Nor had it changed any more than her handwriting, or than the woman herself, as I confidently expected to find her now. I have often thought that on either side of forty both sexes halt mercifully to the eve, and I did not expect Catherine Evers, who could barely have reached that Rubicon, to show much symptom of the later marches. To me, here in her den, the other year was just the other day. My time in India was little better than a dream to me, while, as for angry shots at Gallipoli, it was never I who had been there to hear them. must have come by my sticks in some less romantic fashion. Nothing could convince me that I had ever been many days or miles away from a room that I knew by heart, and found full, as I left it, of familiar trifles and poignant associations.

That was the shelf devoted to her poets; there was no addition that I could see. Over it hung the fine photograph of Watts' "Hope," an ironic emblem, and elsewhere one of that intolerably

sad picture, his "Paolo and Francesca." How I remember the wet Sunday she took me to see the original in Melbury Road. The old piano, which was never touched-the one which had been in St. Helena with Napoleon-there it stood. to an inch where it had stood of old, a sort of grand stand for the photographs of Catherine's friends. I described my own young effigy among the rest, in a frame I remembered giving her at the time, Well, I looked all the idiot I must have been; and there was the very Persian rug that I had knelt on in my idiocy! I could afford to smile at myself to-day, yet now it all seemed yesterday, not even the day before, until, of a sudden, I caught sight of that other photograph in the place of honor on the mantelpiece.

It was the picture of a tall youth in flannels, armed with a long-handled racket, and the sweet, open countenance which Rob Evers had worn from his cradle upward. I should have known him anywhere, and at any age. It was the same dear, honest face; but to think that this giant was little Bob! He had not gone to Eton when I saw him last: now I knew, from the sporting papers, that he was up at Cambridge; but it was left to his photograph to bring home the flight of time. Certainly his mother would never have done so, when, all at once, the door opened, and she stood before me, looking about thirty in the ample shadow of a cavalier's hat. Simply but admirably gowned, as I knew she would be, her slender figure looked more youthful still, yet in all this there was no intent; the dry, cool smile was that of an older woman, and I was prepared for greater cordiality than I could honestly detect in the greeting of the small, firm hand. But it was kind, as, indeed, her whole reception of me was, only it had always been the way of Catherine the correspondent to make one expect something more than mere kindness, and of Catherine the companion to disappoint that expectation. Her jud conversation required few exclamatory in points.

"Still halt and lame," she murmured, over my sticks. "You poor thing, you are to sit down this instant."

And I obeyed her, as I always had, merely remarking that I was getting along famously now.

"You must have had an awful time," continued Catherine, seating herself near me, her calm, wise eyes on mine.

"Blood-poisoning," said I. "It nearly knocked me out, but I'm glad to say it didn't quite."

Indeed, I had never felt quite so glad before.

"Ah, that was too hard and cruel; but I was thinking of the day itself," explained Catherine, and paused in some sweet, transparent awe of one who had been through it.

"It was a beastly day," said I, forgetting her objection to the epithet until it was out. But Catherine did not wince. Her fixed eyes were full of thought.

"It was all that here," she said. "One depressing morning I had a telegram from Bob: 'Hellas Beach occupied.'"

"So Bob," I nodded, "had it as badly as everybody else!"

"Worse," declared Catherine, her eyes hardening. "It was all I could do to keep him at Cambridge, though he had only just gone up. He would have given up everything and flown to the front, if I had let him."

And she wore the inexorable face with which I could picture her standing in his way; and in Catherine I could admire that dogged look and all it stood for, because a great passion is always admirable. The passion of Catherine's life was her boy, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. It had been so when he was quite small. I remembered it, with a pinch of jealousy, startling as a twinge from an old wound. More than ever must it be so now; that

was as natural as the maternal embargo in which Catherine seemed almost to glory. And yet, I reflected, if all the widows had thought only of their only sons—and of themselves!

"And that other most depressing morning!" continued Catherine, happily oblivious of what was passing through my mind. "The first thing I heard was 'Hellas Beach abandoned.' Duncan, it was too awful!"

"I wish we'd sat tight," I said, "I must confess."

"Tight!" cried Catherine, in dry horror. "I should have abandoned it long before! I should have run away! To think that you didn't—that's quite enough for me."

And again I sustained the full flattery of that speechless awe which was yet unembarrassing by reason of its freedom from undue solemnity.

"There were some of us who hadn't a leg to run on," I had to say. "I was one, Mrs. Evers,"

"I beg your pardon?"
"Catherine, then."

But it put me to the blush.

"Thank you. If you really wish me to call you 'Captain Clephane,' you have only to say so; but, in that case, I can't ask the favor I had made up my mind to ask—of so old a friend."

Her most winning voice was as good a servant as ever; the touch of scorn in it was enough to stimulate, but not to sting; and it was the same with the sudden light in the steady, intellectual eves.

"Catherine," I said, "you can't, indeed, ask any favor of me! There, you are quite right. It is not a word to use between us."

She gave me one of her deliberate looks before replying.

"And I am not so sure that it is a favor," she said, softly enough, at last. "It is really your advice I want to ask—in the first place, at all events. Duncan, it's about old Bob!"

The corners of her mouth twitched.

her eyes filled with a quaint, humorous concern, and, as a preamble, she handed me the photograph which I had already studied on my own account.

"Isn't he a dear?" asked Bob's mother. "Would you have known him, Duncan?"

"I did know him," said I; "spotted him at a glance. He's the same old Bob all over."

I was fortunate enough to meet the swift glance I got for that, for, in sheer sweetness and affection, it outdid all remembered glances of the past. In a moment it was as if I had more than regained the lost ground of lost years. And in another moment, on the heels of the discovery, came the still more startling one that I was glad to have regained my ground, was thankful to be reinstated, and strangely, acutely, yet uneasily, happy, as I had never been since the very old days in this very room.

Half in a dream, I heard Catherine telling of her boy, of his Eton triumphs, and yet as simple and unaffected and unspoiled with it all as the small boy I remembered. And I did remember him, and knew his mother well enough to believe it all; for she did not sing his praises to organ music, but rather hummed them to the banjo, and one felt that her own demure humor, so signal and so permanent a charm in Catherine, would have been the saving of half a dozen Bobs.

"And yet," she wound up at her starting-point, "it's about poor old Bob I want to speak to you!"

"Not in a fix, I hope?"
"I hope not, Duncan."

Catherine was serious now.

"Or mischief?"

"That depends on what you mean by mischief."

Catherine was more serious still.

"Well, there are several brands, but only one or two that really poison—unless, of course, a man is very poor." And my mind harked back to its first suspicion—of some financial embarrassment, now conceivable enough; but Catherine told me her boy was not poor, with the air of one who would have drunk ditch water rather than let the other want for champagne.

"It is just the opposite," she added; "in little more than a year, when he comes of age, he will have quite as much as is good for him. You know what he is, or, rather, you don't. I do; and, if I were not his mother, I should fall in

love with him myself!"

Catherine looked down on me, as she returned from replacing Bob's photograph on the mantelpiece. The humor had gone out of her eye; in its place was an almost animal glitter, a far harder light than had accompanied the significant reference to the patriotic impulse which she had nipped in the bud. It was probably only the old, old look of the lioness whose whelp is threatened, but it was something new to me in Catherine Evers, something half repellent, and yet almost wholly fine.

"You don't mean to say it's that?" I

asked, aghast.

"No, I don't," Catherine answered, with a hard little laugh. "He's not quite twenty, remember, but I am afraid that he is making a fool of himself, and I want it stopped."

I was wise enough to wait for more, and merely nodded my sympathetic con-

cern.

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"Poor old Bob, as you may suppose, is not a genius. He is far too nice," declared Catherine's old self, "to be anything so nasty. But I always thought he had his head screwed on, and his heart screwed in, or I never would have let him loose in a Swiss hotel. As it was, I was only too glad for him to go with George Kennerley, who was as good at work at Eton as Bob was at games.

"They were to read together for an hour or two every day. I thought it

would be a nice little change for Bob, and it was quite a chance. He must do a certain amount of work, you see. Well, they only went at the beginning of the month, and already they have had enough of each other's society."

"You don't mean to say they've quar-

reled?"

Catherine inclined a mortified head. "Bob never did such a thing in his life before, nor did I ever know anybody who succeeded in quarreling with Bob. It does take two, you know. And, when one of the two has an angelic temper, and tact enough for twenty—"

"You naturally blame the other," I put in, as she paused, in visible perplex-

ity.

"But I don't, Duncan, and that's just the point. George is devoted to Bob, and is as nice as he can be himself, in his own sober, honest, plodding way. He may not have the temper—he certainly has not the tact—but he loves Bob, and has come back quite miserable."

"Then he has come back, and you

have seen him?"

"He was here last night. You must know that Bob writes to me every day, even from Cambridge, if it's only a line, and in yesterday's letter he mentioned, quite casually, that George had had enough of it, and was off home. It was a little too casual to be quite natural in old Bob, and there are other things he has been mentioning in the same way. If any instinct is to be relied on, it is a mother's, and mine amounted almost to second sight. I sent Master George a telegram, and he came in last night."

"Well?"

"Not a word! There had been a row; that was all I could get out of him. A vulgar row between Bob, of all people, and his greatest friend! If you could have seen the poor fellow sitting where you are sitting now, like a prisoner in the dock! I put him in the witness-box instead, and examined him on scraps of Bob's letters to me. It was

as unscrupulous as you please; but I felt unscrupulous; and the poor dear was too loyal to admit, yet too honest to deny a single thing."

"And-" said I, as Bob's mother

paused again.

"And," cried she, with conscious melodrama in the fiery twinkle of her eye, "and I know all! There is an odious creature at the hotel-a widow, if you please! A 'rippin' widow,' Bob called her in his first letter; then it was 'Mrs. Lascelles,' but now it is only 'some people' whom he escorts here, there, and everywhere. Some people, indeed!"

Catherine smiled unmercifully. I re-

lied on my nod.

"I needn't tell you," she went on, "that the creature is at least twenty years older than my baby, and not at all nice, at that, George didn't tell me, mind; but he couldn't deny a single thing. It was about her that they fell Poor George remonstrated, not too diplomatically, I dare say, but I can quite see that my Bob behaved as he was never known to behave on land or sea. The poor child has been bewitchedthat's what he's been!"

"He'll get over it," I murmured, with the somewhat shaky confidence born of

my own experience.

Catherine looked at me in mild surprise.

"But it's going on now, Duncan-it's

going on still!"

"Well," I added, with all the comfort my voice could carry, "well, Catherine, it can't go very far at his age!" Nor to this hour can I conceive a sounder saying, in all the circumstances of the case, and with one's knowledge of the type of lad; but my fate was the common one of comforters, and I was made speedily and painfully aware that I had now, indeed, said the most unfortunate thing.

Catherine did not stamp her foot, but she did everything else required by tradition of the exasperated female. Not go far? As if it had not gone too far already to be tolerated for another instant longer!

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"He is making a fool of himself-my boy-my Bob-before a whole hotel full of sharp eyes and sharper tongues! Is that not far enough for it to have gone? Duncan, it must be stopped, and stopped at once. But I am not the one to do it. I would rather it went on," cried Catherine tragically, as though the pit yawned before us all, "than that his mother should fly to his rescue before all the world! But a friend might do it, Duncan-if-

Her voice dropped. I bent my ear. "If only," she sighed, "I had a friend that would!"

Catherine was still looking down when I looked up; but the droop of the slender body, the humble angle of the picture hat, the faint flush underneath, all formed together a challenge and an appeal, which were the more irresistible for their sweet shamefacedness. Acute consciousness of the past, I thought. and, I even fancied, some penitence for a wrong by no means past undoing, were in every sensitive inch of her, as she sat a suppliant to the old player of that part.

My hand shook, as I reached for my trusty sticks, but I cannot say that my voice betrayed me when I inquired the

name of the Swiss hotel.

"The Riffel Alp," said Catherine; "above Zermatt, you know."

"I start to-morrow morning," I re-

joined, "if that will do."

Then Catherine looked up. I cannot describe her look. Transfiguration were the idle word, but the inadequate, and yet more than one would scatter the effect of so sudden a burst of human sunlight.

"Would you really go?" she cried. "I only wish," I replied, "that it were

to Australia."

"But, then, you would be weeks too late."

"Ah, that's another story! I may be too late as it is."

Her brightness clouded on the instant; only a gleam of annoyance pierced the cloud.

"Too late for what, may I ask?"

"Everything, except stopping the bans."

"Please don't talk nonsense, Duncan. Bans at nineteen!"

"It is nonsense, I agree; at the same time, the minor consequences will be the hardest to deal with. If they are being talked about, well, they are being talked about. You know Bob better than I. Suppose he is making a fool of himself, is he the sort of fellow to stop because I tell him so? I should say not, from what I know of him, and of you."

"I don't know," argued Catherine, looking pleased with her compliment. "You used to have quite an influence over him, if you remember."

"I can just remember it; but then he was a small boy, and now he is a grown man."

"But you are a much older one."

"Too old to trust to mere age."

"And you have been wounded in the war!"

"That hotel is probably full of wounded men; if not, I may get a little unworthy purchase there. In any case, I'll go. I should have to go somewhere before many days. It may as well be to that place as to another. I have heard that the air is glorious; and I'll keep an eye on Robin, if I can't do anything else."

"That's enough for me," cried Catherine warmly. "I have sufficient faith in you to leave all the rest to your own discretion and good sense and better heart. And I never shall forget it, Duncan; never, never! You are the one person he wouldn't instantly suspect as an emissary, besides being the only one I ever—ever trusted well enough to —to take at your word, as I have done."

I thought myself that the sentence

might have taken a different turn without untruth or necessary complications. Perhaps my conceit was on a scale with my acknowledged infirmity where Catherine was concerned. But I did think that there was more than trust in the eyes that now melted into mine; there was liking, at least, and gratitude enough to determine me to win infinitely more. I went so far as to take in mine the hand to which I had dared to aspire in the temerity of my youth; nor shall I pretend for a moment that the old aspirations had not already mounted to their old seat in my brain. On the contrary, I was only wondering whether the honesty of voicing my hopes would nowise counterbalance the caddishness of the sort of stipulation I had in mind.

"All I ask," I was saying to myself, "is that you will give me another chance, and take me seriously this time, if I prove myself worthy in the way you want."

But I am thankful to think I had not said it to Catherine when tea came up, and saved a dangerous situation.

I stayed another hour, at least, and there are few in my memory which passed more deliciously. In writing of it now, I feel that I have made too little of Catherine Evers, in my anxiety not to make too much, yet am about to leave her to stand or to fall in the reader's opinion, by such impression as I have already succeeded in creating in his or her mind. Let me add one word, or two, while yet I may.

A baron's daughter—though you might have known Catherine some time without knowing that—she had, nevertheless, married for mere love, as a very young girl, and been left a widow before the birth of her boy. I never knew her husband, though we were distant kin, nor yet herself during the long years through which she mourned him. She was beginning to recover her interest in the world when first we met, but she never returned to that identical fold of

society in which she had been born and bred. It was, of course, despite her own performance, a fold to which the worldly wolf was no stranger; and her trouble had turned a light-hearted little lady into an eager, intellectual, speculative being, with a sort of shame for her former estate, and an undoubted reactionary dislike of all dominion and petty Of her own high folk, one neither saw nor heard a thing; her friends were the powerful preachers of most denominations, and one or two that only painted or wrote; for she had been greatly exercised about religion, and somewhat solaced by the arts.

Of her charm for me, a lad with a sneaking regard for the pen, even when I buckled on the sword, I need not be too analytical. No doubt about her kindly interest, in the first instance, in so morbid a curiosity as a subaltern that cared for books and was prepared to extend his gracious patronage to pictures also. This subaltern had only too much money, and, if the truth be known, only too little honest interest in the career into which he had allowed himself to An early stage of that career brought him up to London, and family pressure drove him on a day to Elm Park Gardens. The rest is easily conceived. Here was a woman, still young, though some years older than oneself; attractive, intellectual, amusing, the soul of sympathy, at once a spiritual influence, and the best companion in the world; and once, at least, she had taken a perhaps imprudent interest in a lad whom she interested on so many and various accounts. Must you marvel that the young fool mistook the interest on both sides for a more intense feeling, of which he, at least, had no experience at the time, and that he fell by his mistake at a ridiculously early stage of his career?

It is, I grant, more surprising to find the same young man playing Harry Esmond—at due distance—to the same Lady Castlewood after years in India and a taste of two wars. But Catherine's room was Catherine's room, a very haunt of the higher sirens, charged with noble promptings and forgotten influences and impossible vows. And you will please bear in mind that, as yet, I am only setting forth, from this rarefied atmosphere, upon my invidious mission.

CHAPTER II.

It is a far cry to Zermatt at the best of times, and that is not the middle of August. The annual rush was at its height, the trains crowded, the heat of them overpowering. I chose to sit up all night in my corner of an ordinary compartment, as a lesser evil than the wagon-lit, in which you cannot sit up at all. In the morning one was in Switzerland, with a black collar, a rusty chin and a countenance in keeping with its appointments. It was not as if the night had been beguiled for me by such considerations as are only proper to the devout pilgrim in his lady's service.

On the contrary, I found it quite impossible to sustain such a serious view of the very special service to which I was foresworn; the more I thought of it, in one sense, the less in another, until my only chance was to go forward with grim humor in the spirit of impersonal curiosity which that attitude begets. In a word, and the cant one which yet happens to express my state of mind to a nicety. I had already "weakened" on the whole business that I had been in such a foolish hurry to undertake, though not for a moment upon her for whom I had undertaken it. I was still entirely eager to do her behest, in pleasure or in pain. But this particular enterprise I was beginning to view apart from its inspiration in its intrinsic demerits, and, the more clearly I saw it in its own light, the less pleasure did the prospect afford me.

A young giant, whom I had not seen since his childhood, was merely understood to be carrying on a conspicuous, but in all probability a most innocent, flirtation in a Swiss hotel; and here was I, on mere secondhand hearsay, crossing half Europe to spoil his perfectly legitimate sport! I did not examine my project from the unknown lady's point of view; it made me quite hot enough to consider it from that of my own sex. Yet, the day before yesterday, I had more than acquiesced in the dubious plan—had even volunteered for its achievement.

The train rattled out one long maddening tune to my own incessant marvelings at my own secret apostasy; the stuffy compartment was not Catherine's sanctum of the quickening memorials and the olden spell. Catherine herself was no longer before me, in the vivacious flesh, with her half-playful pathos of word and look, her fascinating outward light and shade, her deeper and steadier intellectual glow. Those, I suppose, were the charms which had undone me, first as well as last; but the memory of them was no solace in the Nor was I tempted to dream again of ultimate reward. I could see now no further than my immediate part; a more distasteful mixture of the mean and of the ludicrous I hope never to rehearse again.

One mitigation I might have set against the rest. Dining at the Rag the night before I left, I met a man that knew a man then staying at the Riffel Alp. My man was a sapper with whom I had had a very slight acquaintance out in India, but he happened to be one of those good-natured creatures that never hesitate to bestir themselves or their friends to oblige a mere acquaintance. He asked if I had secured rooms, and, on learning that I had not, insisted on telegraphing to his friend to do his best for me. I had not hitherto appreciated the popularity of a resort which I happened only to know by name, nor did I even on getting at Lausanne a telegram to say that a room was duly reserved for

me. It was only when I actually arrived, tired out with travel, toward the second evening, and when half of those who had come up with me were sent down again to Zermatt for their pains, that I felt as grateful as I ought to have been from the beginning. Here, upon a mere ledge of the high Alps, was a hotel, with tier upon tier of windows winking in the setting sun. On every hand were dazzling peaks piled against a turquoise sky, yet drawn respectfully apart from the incomparable Matterhorn, that proud, grim chieftain of them all.

My unknown friend at court, one Quinby, a civilian, came up and spoke before I had been five minutes at my destination. He was a very tall and extraordinarily thin man, with an ill-nourished, red mustache, and an easy geniality of a somewhat acid sort. He had a trick of laughing softly through his nose, and my two sticks served to excite a sense of humor as odd as its habitual

expression.

"I'm glad you carry the outward signs," said he, "for I made the most of your wounds, and you really owe your room to them. You see, we're a very representative crowd. That festive old boy strutting up and down, with his cigar, in the Panama hat, is really best known in the black cap; it's old Sankey, the hanging judge. The big man, with his back turned, you will know in a moment when he looks this way. It's the celebrated actor, Belgrave Teale. comes down in one or other of his parts every day; to-day it's the genial squire, yesterday it was the haw-haw officer of the old school. But a real, live officer from the front we don't happen to have had, much less a wounded one, and vou limp straight into the breach."

I should have resented these pleasantries from an ordinary stranger, but this libertine might be held to have earned his charter, and, moreover, I had further use for him. We were loitering on the steps between the glass veranda and the terrace at the back of the hotel. The little, sunlit stage was full of vivid, trivial, transitory life. It seemed as a foil to the vast, eternal scene. The hanging judge still strutted, with his cigar, peering jocosely from under the broad brim of his Panama; the great actor still posed aloof, the human Matterhorn of the group. I descried no showy woman with a tall youth dancing attendance; among the brick-red English faces, there was not one that bore the least resemblance to the latest photograph of Bob Evers.

A little consideration suggested my first move.

"I think I saw a visitors' book in the hall," I said. "I may as well write down my name."

But, before doing so, I ran my eye up and down the pages inscribed by those who had arrived that month.

"See anybody you know?" inquired Quinby, who hovered obligingly at my elbow. It was really necessary to be as disingenuous as possible, more especially with a person whose own conversation was evidently quite unguarded.

"Yes, by Jove, I do! Robin Evers, of all people!"

"Do you know him?"

The question came very quickly. I was sorry I had said so much.

"Well, I once knew a small boy of that name; but, then, they are not a small clan."

"His mother's the Honorable," said Quinby, with studious unconcern, yet I fancied with increased interest in me.

"I used to see something of them both," I deliberately admitted, "when the lad was little. How has he turned out?"

Quinby gave his peculiar, nasal laugh.
"A nice youth," said he. "A very nice youth!"

"Do you mean nice or nasty?" I asked, inclined to bridle at his tone,

"Oh, anything but nasty," said

Quinby. "Only—well—perhaps a bit rapid for his years!"

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I stooped and put my name in the book before making any further remark. Then I handed Quinby my cigarette case, and we sat down on the nearest lounge.

"Rapid, is he?" said I. "That's quite interesting. And how does it take him?"

"Oh, not in any way that's discreditable; but, as a matter of fact, there's a gay, young widow here, and they're fairly going it!"

I lit my cigarette, with a certain unexpected sense of downright satisfaction. So there was something in it, after all! It had seemed such a fool's errand in the train.

"A young widow," I repeated, emphasizing one of Quinby's epithets and ignoring the other.

"I mean, of course, she's a good deal older than Evers."

"And her name?"
"A Mrs. Lascelles."

I nodded.

"Do you happen to know anything about her?"

"Not that I can say. No more does anybody else, Captain Clephane, except that she's an Indian widow of sorts."

"Indian!" I repeated, with more interest.

Quinby looked at me.

"You've been out there yourself, perhaps?"

"It was there I knew Hamilton," I said, naming our common friend in the engineers.

"Yet you're sure you never came across Mrs. Lascelles there?"

"India's a large place," I said, smiling, as I shook my head.

"I wonder if Hamilton did?" speculated Quinby, aloud.

"And the Lascelles," I added, "are another large clan."

"Well," he went on, after a moment's further cogitation, "there's nobody here can place this particular Mrs. Lascelles, but there are some say things they can tell you for themselves. I'm not going to repeat them, if you know anything about the boy. I only wish you knew him well enough to give him a friendly word of advice."

"Is it so bad as all that?"

"My dear sir, I don't say there's anything bad about it," returned Quinby, who seemed to possess a pretty gift of suggestive negation; "but you may hear another opinion from other people, for you will find that the whole hotel is talking about it. No," he went on, watching my eyes, "it's no use looking for them at this time of day; they disappear from morning to night. If you want to see them, you must take a stroll when everybody else is thinking of turning in. Then you may have better luck. But here are the letters, at last."

The concierge had appeared, hugging an overflowing armful of postal matter. In another minute there was hardly standing room in the little hall.

As I dressed in my small, low room, at the top of the house, with its sloping ceiling of varnished wood, I felt that, after all, I had learned nothing really new respecting my disturbing young gentleman. Quinby had already proved himself such an arrant gossip as to discount every word that he had said before I placed him in his proper type. It is one which I have encountered elsewhere-that of the middle-aged bachelor who will and must talk, and he had confessed his celibacy almost in his first breath; but a more pronounced specimen of the type I am in no hurry to meet again.

I was somewhat late for dinner, but the scandalous couple were later still, and all the evening I saw nothing of them. That, however, was greatly due to that fellow Quinby, whose determined offices one could hardly disdain after once accepting favors at his hand. In the press, after dinner, I saw his ferret's face peering this way and that, a good

head higher than any other, and the mo-: 911 ment our eyes met, he began elbowing salt his way toward me. Only an ingrate sittle would have turned and fled; and for the next hour or two I suffered Quinby to I cal exploit my wounds and me for a good deal more than our intrinsic value. To do the man justice, however, I had no fault to find with the very pleasant little circle into which he insisted on ushering me, at one end of the glazed veranda, and should have enjoyed my evening, but for an inquisitive anxiety to get in touch with the unsuspecting pair. Meanwhile, the lilt of a waltz had mingled with the click of billiard balls and the talking and laughing, which alone make night vocal in that outpost of pleasure on the silent heights. Some of our party had gone off to dance. In the end I followed them, sticks and all; but there was no Bob Evers among the dancers, nor in the billiard room.

Then, last of all, I looked where Quinby had advised me to look, and there, sure enough, on the almost deserted terrace, were the couple whom I had come several hundred miles to put asunder. Hitherto, I had only realized the distasteful character of my task. Now, at a glance, I had my first inkling of its difficulty.

There was no moon, but the mountain stars were the brightest I have ever seen in Europe. The mountains themselves stood back, as it were, darkling and unobtrusive; all that was left of the Matterhorn was a towering gap in the stars; and in the faint, cold light stood my friends somewhat close together, and I thought I saw the red tips of two cigarettes. There was, at least, no mistaking the long, loose limbs in the light overcoat. And, because a woman always looks relatively taller than a man, this woman looked almost as tall as this lad.

"Bob Evers? You may not remember me, but my name's Clephane—Duncan, you know!" I felt the veriest scoundrel, and yet the words came out as smoothly as I have written them, as if to show me that I had been a potential scoundrel all my life.

"Duncan Clephane? Why, of course, I remember you. I should think I did! I say, though, you must have had a shocking time!"

Bob's voice was quite quiet for all his astonishment, his manner a miracle, though it was too dark to read the face. And his hand fell tenderly to mine, as his eyes fell upon my sticks, while his left poised a steady cigarette; and now I saw that there was only one red tip, after all.

"I read your name in the visitors' book," said I, feeling too big a brute to acknowledge the boy's solicitude for me. "I—I felt certain it must be you."

"How splendid!" cried the great fellow, in his easy, soft, unconscious voice. "By the way, may I introduce you to Mrs. Lascelles? Captain Clephane's one of our very oldest friends, just back from the front, and precious nearly blown to bits!"

CHAPTER III.

Mrs. Lascelles and I exchanged our bows. For a dangerous woman, there was a rather striking want of study in her attire. Over her raincoat, the night being chilly, she had put on her golf cape as well, and the effect was a little heterogeneous. It also argued qualities other than those for which I was, naturally, on the watch. Of the lady's face, I could see even less than of Bob's, for the hood of the cape was turned up, like a monk's cowl. But, while I peered, she let me hear her voice, and a very rich one it was, almost deep in tone, the voice of a woman that would sing contralto.

"Have you really been fighting?" she asked, in a way that was either put on, or else the expression of a more understanding sympathy than one usually pro-

voked; for pity and admiration, and even a helpless woman's envy, might all have been discovered by an ear less critical and more charitable than mine.

"Like anything!" answered Bob, in his unaffected speech.

"Until they knocked me out," I felt bound to add, "and that, unfortunately, was before very long."

"You must have been dreadfully wounded!" said Mrs. Lascelles, raising her eyes from my sticks and gazing at me, I fancy, with some intentness; but, at her expression, I could only guess.

"Bowled over in Gallipoli," said Bob, "and fairly riddled as he lay."

"But only about the legs, Mrs. Lascelles," I explained; "and, you see, I didn't lose either, so I've no cause to complain."

"So he went staggering about among his men," he must needs chime in, with other superfluities, "for I remember reading all about it in the papers, and boasting like anything about having known you, but feeling simply green with envy of you all the time. I say, you'll be a tremendous hero up here, you know! I'm awfully glad you've come. It's quite funny, all the same. I suppose you came here to get your strength back? He couldn't have found a better place, could he, Mrs. Lascelles?"

"Indeed, he could not. I only wish we could empty the hotel, and fill every bed with our poor wounded!"

I do not know why I should have felt so much surprise. I had made unto myself my own image of Mrs. Lascelles, and neither her appearance nor a single word that had fallen from her was in the least in keeping with my conception. Prepared for a certain type of woman, I was quite confounded by its unconventional embodiment, and inclined to believe that this was not the type at all. I ought to have known life better. The most scheming mind may well entertain an enthusiasm for arms, genuine enough in itself, at a martial crisis, and a natural

manner is by no means incompatible with the baser vices. That manner and that enthusiasm were absolutely all that I, as yet, knew in favor of this Mrs. Lascelles. But they were enough to cause me irritation. I wished to be honest with somebody; let me at least be honestly inimical to her. I took out my cigarette case, and, when about to help myself, handed it, with a vile pretense at impulse, to Mrs. Lascelles instead.

Mrs. Lascelles thanked me, but declined.

"Don't you smoke?" I asked, blandly. "Sometimes."

"Ah! Then I wasn't mistaken. I thought I saw two cigarettes just now."

Indeed, I had first smelled and afterward discovered the second cigarette smoldering on the ground. Bob was smoking his still. The chances were that they had both been lighted at the same time. Therefore, the other had been thrown away, unfinished, at my approach. And that was one more variation from the type of my confident preconceptions.

Young Robin had, meanwhile, had a quick eye on us both, and the stump of his own cigarette was glowing between a firmer pair of lips than I had looked for in that boyish face.

"It's so funny," said he—but there was no fun in his voice—"the prejudice some people have against women smoking. Why shouldn't they? Where's the harm?"

Now, there is no new plea to be advanced on either side of this eternal question, nor is it one upon which I ever felt strongly, but just then I felt tempted to speak as though I did. I will not now dissect my motive, but it was vaguely connected with my mission, and not unrighteous from that standpoint. I said it was not a question of harm at all, but of what one admired in a woman and what one did not; a man loved to look upon a woman as something above and beyond him, and there could be no

doubt that the gap seemed a little less when both were smoking like twin funnels. That, I thought, was the adverse point of view. I did not say that it was mine.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Bob Evers, with the faintest coldness in his tone, though I fancied he was fuming within, and admired both his chivalry and his self-control. "To me it's quite funny. I call it sheer selfishness. We enjoy a cigarette ourselves. Why shouldn't they?"

"That's hitting below the belt," said I, laughing. "I wasn't giving you my opinion, but only the old-fashioned view of the matter. I wish you'd take one, Mrs. Lascelles, or I shall think I've been misunderstood all round!"

"No, thank you, Captain Clephane. That old-fashioned feeling is infectious."

"Then I will," cried Bob, "to show there's no ill-feeling. You old fireeater, I believe you put up the argument just to change the conversation. Wouldn't you like a chair for those game legs?"

"No, I've got to use them in moderation. I was going to have a stroll, when I spotted you at last."

"Then, we'll all take one together," cried the genial old Bob once more. "It's a bit cold standing here, don't you think, Mrs. Lascelles? After you with the match!"

But I held it so long that he had to strike another, for I had looked on Mrs. Lascelles at last. It was not an obviously interesting face, like Catherine's, but interest there was, of another kind. There was nothing intellectual in the low brow, no enthusiasm for books and pictures in the bold eyes, no witticism waiting on the full lips; but in the curve of those lips and the look from those eyes, as in the deep chin and the carriage of the hooded head, there was something, perhaps, not lower than the intellect in the scale of personal equip-

ment. There was, at all events, character, and to spare. Even by the brief glimmer of a single match, I could see that—and something more—for myself. Then came a moment's interval before Bob struck his light, and in that moment her face changed. As I saw it next, it appealed, it entreated, until the second match was flung away. And the appeal was to such purpose that I do not think I was five seconds silent.

"And what do you do with yourself up here all day? I mean, you hale people? Of course, I can only potter in

the sun."

The question, perhaps, was better in intention than in tact. I did not mean them to take it to themselves, but Bob's answer showed that it was open to misconstruction.

"Some people climb," said he; "you'll know them by their noses. The glaciers are almost as bad, though, aren't they, Mrs. Lascelles? Lots of people potter about the glaciers. It's rather sport in the séracs; you've got to rope. But you'll find lots more loafing about the place all day, reading Tauchnitz novels, and watching people on the Matterhorn through the telescope. That's the sort of thing, isn't it, Mrs. Lascelles?"

She also had misunderstood the drift of my unlucky question. But there was nothing disingenuous in her reply. It reminded me of her eyes, as I had seen them by the light of the first match.

"Mr. Evers doesn't say that he is a climber himself, Captain Clephane; but he is, a very keen one, and so am I. We are both beginners, so we have begun together. It's such fun. We do some little thing every day; to-day we did the Schwarzee. You won't be any wiser, and the real climbers won't call it climbing; but it means three thousand feet, first and last. To-morrow we are going to the Monte Rosa hut. There is no saying where we shall end, if this weather holds!"

In this fashion Mrs. Lascelles not only made me a contemptuous present of information which I had never sought, but tacitly rebuked poor Bob for his gratuitous attempt at concealment. Clearly, they had nothing to conceal, and the hotel talk was neither more nor less than hotel talk. There was, nevertheless, a certain self-consciousness in the attitude of either—unless I grossly misread them both—which, of itself, afforded some excuse for the gossips in my own mind.

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Yet I did not know; every moment they gave me a new point of view. On my remarking genuinely enough that I only wished I could go with them, Bob Evers echoed the wish so heartily that I could not but believe that he meant what he said. On his side, in that case, there could be absolutely nothing. And yet, again, when Mrs. Lascelles had left us, as she did ere long, in the easiest and most natural manner, and when we had smoked a last cigarette together, then once more I was not so sure of him.

"That's rather a handsome woman," said I, with perhaps more than the authority to which my years entitled me. But I fancied it would draw poor Bob.

And it did.

"Rather handsome!" said he, with a soft little laugh, not altogether complimentary to me. "Yes, I should almost go as far myself. Still, I don't see how you know; you haven't so much as seen her, my dear fellow."

"Haven't we been walking up and down outside this lighted veranda for

the last ten minutes!"

Bob emitted a pitying puff.

"Wait till you see her in the sunlight! There's not many of them can stand it, as they get it up here. But she can—like anything!"

"She has made an impression on you, Bob," said I, but in so sedulously inoffensive a manner that his self-betrayal was all the greater when he told me, quite hotly, not to be an ass. Now, I was more than ten years his senior, and Bob's manners were as charming as only the manners of a nice Eton boy can be. Therefore, I held my peace, but with difficulty refrained from nodding sapiently to myself. We took a couple of steps in silence, then Bob stopped short. I did the same. He was still a little stern; we were just within range of the veranda lights, and I can see and hear him to this day, almost as clearly as I did that night.

"I'm not much good at making apologies," he began, with rather less grace than becomes an apologist; but it was more than enough for me from Bob.

"Nor I at receiving them, my dear fellow!"

"Well, you've got to receive one now, whether you accept it or not. I was the ass myself, and I beg your pardon!"

Somehow, I felt it was a good deal for a lad to say, at that age, and with Bob's upbringing and popularity, even though he said it rather scornfully in the fewest words. The scorn was really for himself, and I could well understand it. Nay, I was glad to have something to forgive in the beginning, I with my unforgivable mission, and would have laughed the matter off without another word, if Bob had let me.

"I'm a bit raw on the point," said he, taking mry arm for a last turn, "and that's the truth. There was a fellow who came out with me, quite a good chap, really, and a tremendous pal of mine at Eton, yet he behaved like a lunatic about this very thing. Poor chap, he reads like anything, and I suppose he'd been overdoing it, for he actually asked me to choose between Mrs. Lascelles and himself! What could a fellow do, except let the poor, old simpleton go? They seem to think you can't be pals with a woman without wanting to make love to her. Such utter rot! I confess I lose my temper with them; but that doesn't excuse me in the least for losing it with you."

I assured him, on the other hand, that his very natural irritability on the subject made all the difference in the world.

"But whom," I added, "do you mean by 'them?" Not anybody else in the hotel?"

"Good heavens, no!" cried Bob, finding a fair target for his scorn at last. "Do you think I care twopence what is said or thought by people I never saw in my life before and am never likely to see again? I know how I'm behaving. What does it matter what they think? Not that they're likely to bother their heads about us any more than we do about them."

"You don't know that."

"I certainly don't care," declared my lordly youth, with obvious sincerity. "No: I was only thinking of poor, old George Kennerly, and people like him, if there are any. I did care what he thought-that is, until I saw he was as mad as anything on the subject. It was too silly. I tell you what, though, I'd value your opinion!" And he came to another stop, and confronted me again, but this time such a picture of boyish impulse and of innocent trust in meeven by that faint light-that I was myself strongly inclined to be quite honest with him on the spot. But I only smiled and shook my head.

"Oh. no, you wouldn't," I assured him.

"But I tell you I would!" he cried. "Do you think there's any harm in my going about with Mrs. Lascelles, because I rather like her, and she rather likes me? I won't condescend to give you my word that I mean none!"

What answer could I give? His charming frankness quite disarmed me, the more completely because I felt that a dignified reticence would have been yet more characteristic of this clean, sweet youth, with his noble unconsciousness alike of evil and of evil speaking. I told him the truth—that there could be no harm at all, with such a fellow as

himself. And he wrung my hand until he hurt it; but the physical pain was a relief.

Never can I remember going up to bed with a better opinion of another person and a worse one of myself. How could I go on with my thrice detestable undertaking? Now that I was so sure of him, why should I even think of it for another moment? Why not go back to London and tell his mother that her early confidence had not been misplaced, that the lad knew how to take care of himself, and, better still, of any woman whom he chose to honor with his bright, pure-hearted friendship? All this I felt, as strongly as any conviction I have ever held. Why, then, could I not write it at once to Catherine in so many words?

Strange how one forgets, how I had forgotten in half an hour! The reason came home to me on the stairs and for the second time.

It had come home to me first by the light of those two matches, struck outside in the dark part of the deserted terrace. It was not the lad that I distrusted, but the woman, of whose face I had then obtained my only sight, but not my first,

I had known her, after all, in India, years before.

CHAPTER IV.

Once at Simla—the only time that I was ever there—it was my fortune to dance with a Mrs. Heymann, of Lahore, a tall woman, but a featherweight partner, and in all my dancing days I never had a better waltz. To my delight, she had one other left, though near the end, and we were actually dancing, when an excitable person came out of the cardroom, flushed with liquor and losses, and carried her off in the most preposterous manner. It was a shock to me at the time to learn that this outrageous little man was my partner's husband. Months later, when I came across their case in

the papers, it was, I am afraid, without much sympathy for the injured husband. The man was quite unpresentable, and I had seen no more of him at Simla, but of the woman just enough to know her by match light on the terrace at the Riffel Alp.

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And this was Bob's widow-this dashing divorcée! Dashing she was, as I now remembered her; fine in mold. finer in spirit, reckless and rebellious, as she well might be. I had seen her submit before a ballroom, but with the contempt that leads captivity captive. Seldom have I admired anything more. It was splendid even to remember-the ready outward obedience, the not less apparent indifference and disdain. There was a woman whom any man might admire, who had had it in her to be all things to some man! But Bob Evers was not a man at all. And this -and this-was his widow!

Was she one at all? How could one tell? Yes, it was Lascelles, the other name in the case, to the best of my recollection. But had she any right to bear it? And, even supposing they had married, what had happened to the second husband? Widow or no widow, second marriage or no second marriage, defensible or indefensible, was this the right friend for a lad still fresh from Eton, the only son of his mother, who had sent me in secret to his side?

There was only one answer to the last question, whatever might be said or urged in reply to all the rest. I could not but feel that Catherine Evers had been justified in her instinct to an almost miraculous degree; that her worst fears were true enough, so far as the lady was concerned; and that Providence alone could have inspired her to call in an agent that knew what I knew, and, therefore, saw his duty as plainly as I already saw mine. But it is one thing to recognize a painful duty and quite another to know how to minimize the pain to those most affected by its

performance. The problem was no easy one to my mind, and I lay awake upon it far into the night.

Tired out with travel, I fell asleep in the end, to awake with a start in broad daylight. The sun was pouring through the uncurtained dormer window of my room under the roof. And in the sunlight, looking his best in knickerbockers, as only thin men do, with face greased against wind and glare, and blue spectacles in rest upon an Alpine wideawake, stood the lad that had taken

"I'm awfully sorry," he began. "It's horrid cheek, but, when I saw your room full of light, I thought you might have been even earlier than I was. You must get them to give you curtains up here."

his share in keeping me awake.

He had a note in his hand, and I thought, by his manner, there was something that he wished, and yet hesitated to tell me. I asked him, therefore, what it was.

"It's what we were speaking about last night!" burst out Bob. why I've come to you. It's these silly fools that can't mind their own business, and think everybody else is like themselves! Here's a note from Mrs. Lascelles, which makes it plain that that old idiot, George, is not the only one that has been talking about us, and some of the talk has reached her ears. She doesn't say so in so many words, but I can see it's that. She wants to get out of our expedition to Monte Rosa hutwants me to go alone. The question is, ought I to let her get out of it? Does it matter one rap what this rabble says about us? I've come to ask your advice-you were so awfully decent about it all last night-and what you say I'll do."

I had begun to smile at Bob's notion of a "rabble;" this one happened to include a few quite eminent men, to say nothing of the average quality of the crowd, of which I had been able to form some opinion of my own. But I had already noticed in Bob the exclusiveness of the type to which he belonged, and had welcomed it as one does welcome the little faults of the well-nigh fault-less. It was his last sentence that made me feel too great a hypocrite to go on smiling.

"It may not matter to you," I said, at length, "but it may to the lady."

"I suppose it does matter more to them?"

The sunburned face, puckered with a wry wistfulness, was only comic in its incongruous coat of grease. But I was under no temptation to smile. I had to confine my mind pretty closely to the general principle, and rather studiously to ignore the particular instance, before I could bring myself to answer the almost infantile inquiry in those honest eyes.

"My dear fellow, it must!"

Bob looked disappointed, but resigned.

"Well, then, I won't press it, though I'm not sure that I agree. You see, it's not as if there was, or ever would be, anything between us. The idea is absurd. We are simply friends, and nothing else. That's what makes all this so unnecessary. Now, she wants me to go alone, but I don't see the fun of that"

"Does she ask you to go alone?"
"She does. That's the worst of it."
I nodded, and he asked me why.

"She probably thinks it would be the best answer to the tittle-tattlers, Bob."

That was not a deliberate lie; not until the words were out did it occur to me that Mrs. Lascelles might now have another object in getting rid of her swain for the day. But Bob's eyes lighted in a way that made me feel a deliberate liar.

"By Jove!" he said. "I never thought of that. I don't agree with her, mind, but, if that's her game, I'll play it like a book. So long, Duncan! I'm not one

of those who ask a man's advice without the slightest intention of ever taking it!"

"But I haven't ventured to advise you," I reminded the boy, with a cowardly eye to the remotest consequences.

"Perhaps not, but you've shown me what's the proper thing to do." And he went away to do it, there and then, like the blameless exception that I found

him to so many human rules.

I had my breakfast upstairs after this, and lay for some considerable time a prey to feelings which I shall make no further effort to express, for this interview had not altered, but only intensified them.

And it was my ironic luck to be so circumstanced in a place where I could have enjoyed life to the hilt! Only to lie with the window open was to breathe air of a keener purity, a finer temper, a more exhilarating freshness, than had ever before entered my lungs; and to get up and look out of the window was to look into the limpid brilliance of a gigantic crystal, where the smallest object was in startling focus, and the very sunbeams cut with scissors. The people below trailed shadows like running ink. The light was ultra-tropical. One looked for drill suits and pith headgear, and was amazed to find pajamas insufficient at the open window.

Upon the terrace on the other side, when I eventually came down, there were cane chairs and Tauchnitz novels under the umbrella tents, and the telescope out and trained upon a party on the Matterhorn. Several were waiting turns at the telescope, my friend Quinby and the hanging judge among them. But I searched under the umbrella tents, as well as one could from the top of the steps, before hobbling down to join the

group.

"I have looked for an accident through that telescope," said the jocose judge, "fifteen Augusts running. They usually have one the day after I go."

"Good morning, sir!" was Quinby's

greeting; and I was instantly introduced to Sir Richard Sankey, with such a parade of my military history as made me wince and Sir Richard's eye twinkle. I fancied he had formed an unkind estimate of my tutelary friend, and lived to hear my impression confirmed in unjudicial language. But our first conversation was about the war, and it lasted until the judge's turn came for the telescope.

"Black with people!" he ejaculated.
"They ought to have a constable up

there to regulate the traffic."

But when I looked it was long enough before my inexperienced eye could discern the three midges strung on the single strand of cobweb against

the sloping snow.

"They are coming down," explained the obliging Quinby. "That's one of the most difficult places, the lower edge of the top slope. It's just a little way along to the right where the first accident was. By the way, your friend Evers says he's going to do the Matterhorn before he goes."

It was unwelcome hearing, for Quinby had paused to regale me with a lightning sketch of the first accident, and no one had contradicted his grue-

some details.
"Is young Evers a friend of yours?"

inquired the judge.

"He is."

The judge did not say another word after that.

But Quinby availed himself of the first opportunity of playing the Ancient Mariner to my Wedding Guest.

"I saw you talking to them," he told me confidentially, "last night, you know!"

"Indeed!"

He took me by the sleeve.

"Of course, I don't know what you said, but it's evidently had an effect. Evers has gone off alone for the first time since he has been here."

I shifted my position.

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wond than too, nobly "You evidently keep an eye on him, Mr. Quinby."

"I do, Clephane. I find him a diverting study. He is not the only one in this hotel. There's old Teale on his balcony at the present minute, if you look up. He has the best room in the hotel; the only trouble is that it doesn't face the sun all day; he's not used to being in the shade, and you'll hear him damn the limelight man in heaps, one of these fine mornings. But your enterprising young friend is a more amusing person than Belgrave Teale."

I had heard enough of my enterprising young friend from this quarter.

"Do you never make any expeditions

yourself, Mr. Quinby?"
"Sometimes." Quinby looked puzzled. "Why do you ask?" he was con-

strained to add.

"You should have volunteered instead of Mrs. Lascelles to-day. It would have been an excellent opportunity for prosecuting your own rather enterprising studies."

One would have thought that one's displeasure was plain enough at last; but not a bit of it. So far from resenting the rebuff, the fellow plucked my sleeve, and I saw at a glance that he had not even listened to my too-elaborate sarcasm.

"Talk of the—lady!" he whispered. "Here she comes."

A second glance intercepted Mrs. Lascelles on the steps, with her bold good looks and her fine, upstanding carriage, cut clean as a diamond in that intensifying atmosphere, and hardly less dazzling to the eye. Yet her cotton gown was simplicity's self; it was the right setting for such natural brilliance, a brilliance of eyes and teeth and coloring, a more uncommon brilliance of expression. Indeed, it was a wonderful expression. Indeed, it was a wonderful expression brave, rather than sweet, yet capable of sweetness, too, and for the moment, at least, nobly free from the defensive bitterness

which was to mark it later. So she stood upon the steps, the talk of the hotel, trailing a cane chair behind her with characteristic independence, while she sought a shady place for it, even as I had stood seeking for her. Before she found one I was hobbling toward her.

"Oh, thanks, Captain Clephane, but I couldn't think of allowing you! Well, then, between us, if you insist. Here under the wall, I think, is as good a place as any."

She pointed out a clear space in the rapidly narrowing ribbon of shade, and there I soon saw Mrs. Lascelles settled with her book—a trashy novel, that somehow brought Catherine Evers rather sharply before my mind's eye—in an isolation as complete as could be found upon the crowded terrace, and too intentional on her part to permit of an intrusion on mine. I lingered a moment, nevertheless.

"So you didn't go to that hut, after all, Mrs. Lascelles?"

"No." She waited a moment before looking up at me. "And I'm afraid Mr. Evers will never forgive me," she added, after her look.

I was not going to say that I had seen him before he started, but it was an opportunity of speaking generally of the lad. Thus I found myself commenting on the coincidence of our meeting again-he and I-and again lying before I realized that it was a lie. But Mrs. Lascelles sat looking up at me with her fine and candid eyes, as though she knew as well as I which was the real coincidence, and knew that I knew, into the bargain. It gave me the disconcerting sensation of being detected and convicted at one blow. Bob Evers failed me as a topic, and I stood like the fool I felt.

"I am sure you ought not to stand about so much, Captain Clephane."

Mrs. Lascelles was smiling faintly as I prepared to take her hint.

"Doesn't it really do you any harm?" she added, in time to detain me.

"No, just the opposite. I am ordered to take all the exercise I can."

"Even walking?"

"Even hobbling, Mrs. Lascelles, if I don't overdo it."

She sat some moments in thought. I guessed what she was thinking, and I was right.

"There are some lovely walks quite near, Captain Clephane. But you have to climb a little, either going or coming."

"I could climb a little," said I, making up my mind. "It's within the meaning of the act—it would do me good. Which way will you take me, Mrs. Lascelles?"

Mrs. Lascelles looked up quickly, surprised at a boldness on which I was already complimenting myself. But it is the only way with a bold woman.

"Did I say I would take you at all,

Captain Clephane?"

⁶No, but I very much hope you will." And our eyes met as fairly as they had done by matchlight the night before.

"I will," said Mrs. Lascelles, "because I want to speak to you."

CHAPTER V.

We had come farther than was wise without a rest, but all the seats on the way were in full view of the hotel, and I had been irritated by divers looks and whisperings as we traversed the always crowded terrace. Bob Evers, no doubt, would have turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to them. I could pretend to do so. But pretense was evidently one of my strong points. I had not Bob's fine natural regardlessness, for all my seniority and presumably superior knowledge of the world.

So we had climbed the zigzags to the right of the Riffelberg, and followed the footpath overlooking the glacier, in the silence enjoined by single file, but at last we were seated on the hillside, a trifle beyond that emerald patch which some humorist has christened the cricket Beneath us were the séracs ground. of the Gorner Glacier, teased and tousled like a fringe of frozen break-Beyond the séracs was the main stream of comparatively smooth ice. with its mourning band of moraine. and beyond that the mammoth sween and curve of the Théodule where these glaciers join. Peak after peak of dazzling snow dwindled away to the left, Only the gaunt Riffelhorn reared a brown head against the blue. And there we sat, Mrs. Lascelles and I, with all this before us and a rock behind, while I wondered what my companion meant to say and how she would begin.

I had not to wonder long.

"You were very good to me last

night, Captain Clephane."

There was evidently no beating about the bush for Mrs. Lascelles. I thoroughly approved, but was, nevertheless, somewhat embarrassed for the moment.

"I-really, I don't know how, Mrs.

Lascelles!"

"Oh, yes, you do, Captain Clephane; you recognized me at a glance, as I did you."

"I certainly thought I did," said I, poking about with the ferrule of one of my sticks

"You know you did."

"You are making me know it."

"Captain Clephane, you knew it all along; but we won't argue that point. I am not going to deny my identity. It is very good of you to give me the chance, if rather unnecessary. I am not a criminal, after all. Still, you could have made me feel like one, last night, and many a man would have done so, either for the fun of it or from want of tact."

I looked inquiringly at Mrs. Lascelles. She could tell me what she pleased, but I was not going to anticipate her by displaying an independent knowledge of matters which she might still care to

keep to herself. If she chose to open up a painful subject—well, the pain be upon her own head. Yet, I must say that there was very little of it in her face as our eyes met. There was the eager candor that one could not help admiring, and the glowing look of gratitude which I had done so ridiculously little to earn; but the fine, flushed face betrayed neither pain nor shame, nor the affectation of one or the other. There was a certain shyness with the candor. That was all.

"You know quite well what I mean," continued Mrs. Lascelles, with a genuine smile at my disingenuous face. "When you met me before it was under another name, which you have probably quite forgotten."

"No, I remember it."

"Do you remember my husband?"

"Perfectly."

"Did you ever hear-"

Her lip trembled; I dropped my eyes. "Yes," I admitted, "or, rather, I saw it for myself in the papers. It's no use pretending I didn't, nor yet that I was the least bit surprised!"

That was not one of my tactful speeches. It was culpably—might, in-leed, have been willfully—ambiguous; and yet it was the kind of clumsy and impulsive utterance which has the ring of a good intention, and is thus inoffensive except to such as seek excuses for offense. My instincts about Mrs. Lascelles did not place her in this category at all. Nevertheless, the ensuing pause was long enough to make me feel uneasy, and my companion only broke it as I was in the act of framing an apol-

"May I bore you, Captain Clephane?" she asked abruptly. I looked at her once more. She had regained an equal mastery of face and voice, and the admirable candor of her eyes was undimmed by the smallest trace of tears.

"You may try," said I, smiling with obvious gallantry.

"If I tell you something about myself from that time on, will you believe what I say?"

"You are the last person whom I should think of disbelieving."

"Thank you, Captain Clephane."

"On the other hand, I would much rather you didn't say anything that gave you pain, or that you might afterward regret."

There was a touch of weariness in Mrs. Lascelles' smile, a rather pathetic touch, to my mind, as she shook her head

"I am not very sensitive to pain," she said; "that is the one thing to be said for having to bear a good deal while you are fairly young. I want you to know more about me, because I believe you are the only person here that knows anything at all. And, then—you didn't give me away last night."

I pointed to the grassy ledge in front of us, such a vivid green against the frozen snow a hundred feet below.

"I am not pushing you over there," I said. "I take about as much credit for that."

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Lascelles. "But that dear boy, who turns out to be a friend of yours, he knows less than anybody else! He doesn't even suspect. It would have hurt me, yes, it would have hurt even me, to be given away to him! You didn't do it while I was there, and I know you didn't when I had turned my back."

"Of course you know I didn't," I echoed, rather testily, as I took out a cigarette. The case reminded me of the night before. But I did not again hand it to Mrs. Lascelles.

"Well, then," she continued, "since you didn't give me away, even without thinking, I want you to know that, after all, there isn't quite so much to give away as there might have been. A divorce, of course, is always a divorce. There is no getting away from that, or from mine. But I really did marry

again. And I really am the widow they think I am."

I looked quickly up at her, in pure pity and compassion for one gone so far in sorrow and yet such a little way in life. It was a sudden feeling, an unpremeditated look, but I might as well have spoken aloud. Mrs. Lascelles read me unerringly, and shook her head, sadly but decidedly, while her eyes gazed calmly into mine.

"It was not a happy marriage, either," she said, as impersonally as if speaking of another woman. "You may think what you like of me for saying so to a comparative stranger; but I won't have your sympathy on false pretenses simply because Major Lascelles is dead. Did you ever meet him, by the way?"

And she mentioned an Indian regiment. But the major and I had never met.

"Well, it was not very happy for either of us. I suppose such marriages never are. I know they are never supposed to be. Even if the couple are everything to each other, there is all the world to point his finger, and all the world's wife to turn her back, and you have to care a good deal to get over that. But you may have been desperate in the first instance; you may have said to yourself that the fire couldn't be much worse than the frying-pan. In that case, of course, you deserve no sympathy, and nothing is more irritating to me than the sympathy I don't deserve. It's a matter of temperament; mine obliges me to speak out, even if it puts people more against me than they were already. No, you needn't say anything, Captain Clephane; you didn't express your sympathy. I stopped you in time. And yet it is rather hard, when one's still reasonably young, with almost everything before one-to be a marked woman all one's time!"

Up to her last words, despite an inviting pause after almost every sen-

tence, I had succeeded in holding my tongue; though she was looking wistfully now at the distant snow peaks, and obviously bestowing upon herself the sympathy she did not want from me—as I had been told in so many words, yet more plainly in the accompanying brief encounter between our eyes—yet had I resisted every temptation to put in my word until these last two or three from Mrs. Lascelles. They, however, demanded a denial, and I told her it was absurd to describe herself in such terms.

"I am marked," she persisted.
"Wherever I go I may be known, as you knew me here. If it hadn't been you, it would have been somebody else, and I should have known of it indirectly, instead of directly; but even supposing I had escaped it altogether at this hotel, the next would probably have made up for it."

"Do you stay much in hotels?"

There had been something in her voice which made the question a very natural one, yet it was scarcely asked before I would have given a good deal to recall it.

"There is nowhere else to stay," said Mrs. Lascelles, "unless one has a house alone, and that is costlier and far less comfortable. You see, one does make a friend or two sometimes—before one is found out."

"But surely your people-"
This time I did check myself.

"My people," said Mrs. Lascelles, "have washed their hands of me."

"But Major Lascelles—surely his

"They washed their hands of him! You see, they would be the first to tell you he had always been rather wild; but his crowning act of madness in their eyes was his marriage. It was worse than the worst thing he had ever done before. Still, it is not for me to say anything, or feel anything, against his family."

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And then I knew that they were making her an allowance. It was more than I wanted to know. The ground was too delicate and led nowhere in particular. Still, it was difficult not to take a certain amount of interest in a handsome woman who had made such a wreck of her life so young, who was so utterly alone, so proud and independent in her loneliness, and apparently quite fine-hearted and unspoiled. But for Bob Evers and his mother, the interest that I took might have been a little different in kind: but even with my solicitude for them there mingled already no small consideration for the social solitary whom I watched now as she sat peering across the glacier, the foremost figure in a world of high lights and great backgrounds, and whom to watch was to admire, even against the greatest of them all. Alas! Mere admiration could not change my task, or stay my hand; it could but clog me by destroying my singleness of purpose, and giving me a double heart to match my double face.

Since, however, a detestable duty had been undertaken, and since it was more apparent as a duty than I had dreamed of finding it, there was nothing to do but to go through with the thing and make immediate enemies of my friends. So I set my teeth and talked of Bob. I was glad Mrs. Lascelles liked him. I had known his mother years ago.

"And what is she like?" asked Mrs. Lascelles, calling her fine eyes in from infinity and fixing them once more on me.

CHAPTER VI.

Now, if upon a hard, bright winter's morning, you were suddenly asked to describe an ideal summer's day, either you would have to stop and think a little, or your imagination is more elastic than mine. Yet you might have a passionate preference for summer. To me, Lady Catherine Evers and this Mrs.

Lascelles were as opposite to each other as winter and summer, or the poles, or any other notorious antithesis. There was no comparison between them in my mind, yet as I sat with one among the sunlit, unfamiliar Alps, it was a distinct effort to picture the other in the little London room I loved so well. For it was always among her books and pictures that I thought of Catherine, and to think was to wish myself there at her side, rather than to wish her here at mine. Catherine's appeal, I used to think, was to the highest and best in me, to brain and soul and young ambition, and, withal, to one's love of wit and sense of humor.

Mrs. Lascelles, on the other hand, struck me primarily in the light of some splendid and spirited animal. I still liked to dwell upon her dancing. She satisfied the mere eve more and more. But I had no reason to suppose that she knew right from wrong in art or literature, any more than she would seem to have known it in life itself. Tauchnitz novel lay beside her on the grass, and I again reflected that it would not have found a place on Catherine's loftiest shelf. Catherine would have raved about the view, and made delicious fun of Quinby and the judge, and we should have sat together talking poetry and harmless scandal by the happy hour. Mrs. Lascelles probably took place and people alike for granted. But she had lived, and, as an animal, she was superb! I looked again into her healthy face and speaking eyes, with their bitter knowledge of good and evil, their scorn of scorn, their redeeming honesty and candor. The contrast was complete in every detail, except the widowhood of both women; but I did not pursue it any further, for once more there was but one woman in my thoughts, and she sat near me, under a red parasol, clashing so humanly with the everlasting snows!

"You don't answer my question, Cap-

tain Clephane. How much for your thoughts?"

"I'll make you a present of them, Mrs. Lascelles. I was beginning to think that a lot of rot has been written about the eternal snows, and the mountain tops, and all the rest of it. There are a few lines in that last little volume of Browning—"

I stopped of my own accord, for, upon reflection, the lines would have made a rather embarrassing quotation, but, meanwhile, Mrs. Lascelles had taken alarm on other grounds.

"Oh, don't quote Browning!"

"Why not?"

"He is far too deep for me; besides I don't care for poetry, and I was asking you about Lady Catherine Evers."

"Well," I said, with some little severity, "she's an awfully clever woman."

"Clever enough to understand Browning?"

"Ouite."

If this was irony, it was also self-restraint, for it was to Catherine's enthusiasm that I owed my own. The debt was one of such magnitude as a life of devotion could scarcely have repaid, for to whom does one owe as much as to those who first lifted the scales from our eyes and awakened within us a soul for all such things? Catherine had been to me what I instantly desired to become to this benighted beauty; but the desire was not worth entertaining, since I hardly expected to be many minutes longer on speaking terms with Mrs. Lascelles. I recalled the fact that it was I who had broached the subject of Bob Evers and his mother, together with my unpalatable motive for so doing. And I was seeking in my mind. against the grain, I must confess, for a short cut back to Bob, when Mrs. Lascelles suddenly led the way.

"I don't think," said she, "that Mr. Evers takes after his mother."

"I am afraid he doesn't," I replied, "in that respect."

"And I am glad," she said. "I do like a boy to be a boy. The only son of his mother is always in danger of becoming something else. Tell me, Captain Clephane, are they very devoted to each other?"

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There was some new note in her voice. Was it merely wistful, was it really jealous, or was either element the product of my own imagination? I made answer, while I wondered:

"Absolutely devoted, I should say; but it's years since I saw them together. Bob was a small boy then, and one of the jolliest. Still, I never expected him to grow up the charming chap he is now."

Mrs. Lascelles sat gazing at the great curve of the Théodule Glacier. I watched her face.

"He is charming," she said, at length.
"I am not sure that I ever met anybody quite like him, or, rather, I am sure that I never did. He is so quiet, in a way, and yet so wonderfully confident and at ease!"

"That's Eton," said I. "He is the best type of Eton boy. And the best type of Eton boy," I declared, airing the little conviction with a flourish, "is one of the greatest works of God."

"I dare say you're right," said Mrs. Lascelles, smiling indulgently; "but what is it? How do you define it? It isn't 'side,' and yet I can quite imagine people that don't know him thinking that it is. He is cocksure of himself, but of nothing else; that seems to me to be the difference. No one could possibly be more simple in himself. He has the assurance of a man of fifty, yet it isn't put on; it's neither bumptious nor affected, but just as natural in Mr. Evers as shyness and awkwardness in the ordinary youth one meets."

Were we all mistaken? Was this the way in which a designing woman would speak of the object of her designs? Not that I thought so hardly of Mrs. Lascelles myself, but I did think that she

might well fall in love with Bob Evers—at least, as well as he with her. Was this, then, the way in which a woman would be likely to speak of the young man with whom she had fallen in love? To me the appreciation sounded too frank and discerning and acute. Yet I could not call it dispassionate, and frankness was this woman's outstanding merit, though I was beginning to discover others as well. Moreover, the fact remained that they had been greatly talked about; that, at any rate, must be stopped, and I was there to stop it.

I began to pick my words.

"It's all Eton, except what is in the blood, and it's all a question of manners, or, rather, of manner. Don't misunderstand me, Mrs. Lascelles. I don't say that Bob isn't independent in character as well as in his ways, but only that, when all's said, he's st'll a boy, and not a man. He can't possibly have a man's experience of the world, or even of him shoulders, after all, if not a younger one than many a boy with half the assurance that you admire in him."

Mrs. Lascelles looked at me pointblank.

"Do you mean that he can't take care of himself?"

"I don't say that."

"Then, what do you say?"

The fine eyes met mine without a flicker. The full mouth was curved at the corners in a tolerant, unsuspecting smile. It was hard to have to make an enemy of so handsome and good-humored a woman. And was it necessary? Was it even wise? As I hesitated, she turned and glanced downward once more toward the glacier, then rose and went to the lip of our grassy ledge, and, as she returned, I caught the sound which she had been the first to hear. It was the gritty planting of nailed boots upon hard, smooth rock.

"I'm afraid you can't say it now," whispered Mrs. Lascelles. "Here's Mr.

Evers coming this way back from the Monte Rosa hut! I'm going to give him a surprise!"

And it was a genuine one that she gave him, for I heard his boyish greeting before I saw his hot, brown face, and there was no mistaking the sudden delight of both. It was sudden, spontaneous, complete, until his eyes lit on me. Even then his smile did not disappear, but it changed. So did his tone.

"Good heavens!" cried Bob. "How on earth did you get up here? By rail to the Riffelberg, I hope?"

"On my sticks."

"It was much too far for him," added Mrs. Lascelles, "and all my fault for showing him the way. But I am afraid there was contributory obstinacy in Captain Clephane, too; he simply wouldn't turn back. And now tell us about yourself, Mr. Evers; surely, we were not coming back this way?"

"We were not," said Bob, with a something sardonic in his little laugh, "but I thought I might as well. It's the long way, six miles on end upon the glacier."

"But have you really been to the hut?"

"Rather!"

"And where's your guide?"

"Oh, I couldn't be bothered with a guide all to myself."

"My dear young man, you might have stepped straight into a crevasse!"

"I very nearly did," laughed Bob, again, with something odd about his laughter. "But, if you won't think me awfully rude, I'il push on back, and get changed. I'm as hot as anything, and not fit to be seen."

And he was gone, after very little more than a minute from first to last—gone with rather an elaborate salute to Mrs. Lascelles and rather a cavalier nod to me. But, then, neither of us had made any effort to detain him, and a notable omission I thought it in Mrs. Lascelles, though to the lad himself it

may well have seemed as strange in the old friend as in the new.

"What was it," asked Mrs. Lascelles, when we were on our own way home, "that you were going to say about Mr. Evers when he appeared in that extraordinary way?"

"I forget," said I immorally.

"Really? So soon? Don't you remember, I thought you meant that he couldn't take care of himself, and you were just going to tell me what you did mean?"

"Oh, well, it wasn't that, because he

can!"

But, as a matter of fact, I had seen my way to taking care of Bob without saying a word either to him or to Mrs. Lascelles, or, at all events, without making enemies of them both.

CHAPTER VII.

My plan was quite obvious in its simplicity, and not in the least discreditable from my point of view. It was, perhaps, inevitable that a boy like Bob should imagine I was trying to "cut him out," as my blunt friend, Ouinby, phrased it to my face. I had not, of course, the smallest desire to do any such vulgar thing. All I wanted was to make myself, if possible, as agreeable to Mrs. Lascelles as this dear youth had done before me, and, in any case, to share with him all the perils of her so-In other words, I meant to ciety. squeeze into "the imminent deadly breach" beside Bob Evers, not necessarily in front of him. But, if there was nothing dastardly in this, neither was there anything heroic, since I was proof against that kind of deadliness, if Bob

On the other hand, the whole character of my mission was affected by the decision at which I had now arrived. There was no longer any necessity to speak plainly to anybody. That odious duty was eliminated from my plan of campaign, and the "frontal attack" of

recent history discarded for the "turning movement" of the day. So I had learned something in Gallipoli, after all. I had learned how to avoid hard knocks which might very well do more harm than good to the cause I had at heart. That cause was still sharply defined before my mind, the first and most sacred consideration. I wrote a reassuring dispatch to Catherine Evers, and took it myself to the little post office opposite the hotel that very evening, before dressing for dinner. But I cannot say that I was thinking of Catherine when I proceeded to spoil three successive ties in the tying.

Yet I can only repeat that I felt absolutely proof against the real cause of my solicitude. It is the most delightful feeling, where a handsome woman is concerned. The judgment is not warped by passion or clouded by emotion; you see the woman as she is, not as you wish to see her, and, if she disappoint, it does not matter. You are not left to choose between systematic self-deception and a humiliating admission of your mistake. The lady has not been placed upon an impossible pedestal, and she has not top-

pled down. In this case, the lady started at the most advantageous disadvantage; every admirable quality-her candor, her courage, her spirited independence, her evident determination to piece a broken life together again, and make the best of it-told doubly in her favor to me, with my special knowledge of her past. It would be too much to say that I was deeply interested; but Mrs. Lascelles had inspired me with a certain sympathy and dispassionate regard. tivated she was not, in the conventional sense, but she knew more than can be learned from books. She knew life at first hand, had drained the cup for herself, and yet could savor the lees. Not that she enlarged any further on her own past. Mrs. Lascelles was never a great talker, like Catherine; but she wa could thence viction only a genial with a way w It is

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she was certainly a woman to whom one could talk. And talk to her I did thenceforward, with a conscientious conviction that I was doing my duty, and only an occasional qualm for its congenial character, while Bob listened, with a wondering eye, or went his own

way without a word.

It is easy to criticize my conduct now, It would have been difficult to act otherwise at the time. I am speaking of the evening after my walk with Mrs. Lascelles, of the next day, when it rained, and now of my third night at the hotel. The sky had cleared, The glass was high. There was a finer edge than ever on the silhouetted mountains against the stars. It appeared that Bob and Mrs. Lascelles had talked of taking their lunch to the Findelen Glacier on the next fine day, for he came up and reminded her of it, as she sat with me in the glazed veranda after dinner. I had seen him standing alone under the stars a few minutes before, so this was the result of his cogitation. But in his manner there was nothing studied, much less awkward, and his smile even included me, though he had not spoken to me alone all day.

"Oh, no, I hadn't forgotten, Mr. Evers. I am looking forward to it," said my companion, with a smile of her own to which the most jealous swain could not have taken exception.

Bob Evers looked hard at me.

"You'd better come, too," said he.

"It's probably too far," said I, quite intending to play second fiddle next day, for it was really Bob's turn.

"Not for a man who has been up to the cricket ground," he rejoined.

"But it's dreadfully slippery," put in Mrs. Lascelles, with a sympathetic glance at my sticks.

"Let him get them shod like alpenstocks," quoth Bob, "and nails in his boots; then they'll be ready when he does the Matterhorn!"

It might have passed for boyish ban-

ter, but I knew that it was something more; the use of the third person changed from chaff to scorn as I listened, and my sympathetic resolution went to the winds.

"Thank you," I replied; "in that case, I shall be delighted to come, and I'll take your tip at once by giving orders

about my boots."

And, with that, I resigned my chair to Bob, not sorry for the chance; he should not be able to say that I had monopolized Mrs. Lascelles without intermission from the first. Nevertheless, I was annoyed with him for what he had said, and, for the moment, my actions were no part of my scheme. I was thus in no mood for a familiarity from Quinby, who was hanging about the door between the veranda and the hall, and would not let me pass.

"That is awfully nice of you," he had the impudence to whisper.

"What do you mean?"

"Giving that poor, young beggar another chance!"

"I don't understand you!"

"Oh, I like that! You know very well that you've gone in on the military ticket, and deliberately cut out the poor

voungster---"

I did not wait to hear the end of his gratuitous observation. It was very rude of me, but in another minute I should have been guilty of a worse affront. My annoyance had deepened into something like dismay. It was not only Bob Evers who was misconstruing my little attention to Mrs. Lascelles. I was more or less prepared for that. But here were outsiders talking about usthe three of us! So far from putting a stop to the talk, I had given it a regular fillip; here were Quinby and his friends as keen as possible to see what would happen next, and probably betting on a row. The situation had taken a sudden turn for the worse. I forgot the pleasant hours that I had passed with Mrs. Lascelles, and began to wish myself well out of the whole affair. But I had now no intention of getting out of the glacier expedition. I would not have missed it on any account. Bob had brought that on himself.

And, I dare say, we seemed a sufficiently united trio, as we marched along the pretty, winding path to the Findelen next morning. Dear Bob was not only such a gentleman, but such a man, that it was almost a pleasure to be at secret issue with him. He would make way for me at our lady's side, listen with interest when she made me spin my martial yarns, laugh if there was aught to laugh at, and, in a word, give me every conceivable chance. His manners might have failed him for one heated moment overnight; they were beyond all praise this morning; and I discerned, repeatedly, a morbid sporting dread of giving the adversary less than fair play. It was sad for me to consider myself as such to Catherine's son, but I was determined not to let the thought depress me, and there was much outward occasion for good cheer.

The morning was a perfect one in every way. The rain had released all the pungent aromas of the mountain woods through which we passed. Snowy height came in dazzling contrast with a turquoise sky. The toy town of Zermatt spattered the green hollow far below. And before me on the narrow path went Bob Evers, in a flannel suit, followed by Mrs. Lascelles and her red parasol, though he carried her alpenstock with his own in readiness for the glacier.

Thither we came in this order, I at least very hot from hard hobbling to keep up; but the first breath from the glacier cooled me like a bath, and the next like the great drink in the second stanza of the "Ode to a Nightingale." I could have shouted out for pleasure, and must have done so but for the engrossing business of keeping a footing on the sloping ice, with its soiled margin of yet

more treacherous moraine. Yet, on the glacier itself, I was less handicapped than I had been on the way, and hopped along finely, with my two shod sticks and the sharp, new nails in my boots. Bob, however, was invariably in the van and Mrs. Lascelles seemed more disposed to wait for me than to hurry after him. I think he pushed the pace unwittingly, under the prick of those emotions which otherwise were under such excellent control. I can see him now, continually waiting for us on the brow of some glistening ice slope, leaning on his alpenstock, and looking back, jet-black by contrast between the blinding lines of ice and sky.

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But once he waited on the brink of some unfathomable crevasse, and then we all three cowered together and peeped down. The sides were green and smooth and sinister, like a crack in the sea, yet so close together that one could not have fallen out of sight; yet, when Bob loosened a lump of ice and kicked it in, we heard it clattering from wall to wall in prolonged diminuendo before the faint splash just reached our Mrs. Lascelles shuddered, and threw out a hand to prevent me from peering further over. The gesture was obviously impersonal and instinctive, as an older eve would have seen, but Bob's was smoldering when mine met it next, and in the ensuing advance he left us farther behind than ever.

But on the rock where we had our lunch he was once more himself, bright and boyish, careless and assured. So he continued till the end of that chapter. On the way home, moreover, he never once forged ahead, but was always ready with a hand for Mrs. Lascelles at the awkward places; and, on the way through the woods, nothing would serve him but that I should set the pace, that we might all keep together. Judge, therefore, of my surprise when he came to my room, as I was dressing for the absurdly early

dinner which is the one blot upon Riffel Alp arrangements, with the startling remark that we "might as well run

straight with each other."

"By all means, my dear fellow," said I, turning to him, with the lather on my chin. He was dressed already, as perfectly as usual, and his hands were in his pockets. But his fresh, brown face was as grave as any judge's, and his mouth as stern. I went on to ask, disingenuously enough, if we had not been "running straight with each other" as it was.

"Not quite," said Bob Evers dryly, "and we might as well, you know!"

"To be sure; but don't mind if I go on shaving, and pray speak for yourself."

"I will," he rejoined. "Do you remember our conversation the night you came?"

"More or less."

"I mean when you and I were alone together, before we turned in."

"Oh, yes, I remember something about it."

"It would be too silly to expect you to remember much," he went on, after a pause, with a more delicate irony than heretofore. "But, as a matter of fact, I believe I said it was all rot that people talked about the impossibility of being mere friends with a woman, and all that sort of thing."

"I believe you did."

"Well, then, that was rot-that is all!"

I turned around, with my razor in mid-air.

"My dear fellow!" I exclaimed.

"Quite funny, isn't it?" he laughed, but rather harshly, while his mountain bronze deepened under my scrutiny.

"You are not in earnest, Bob!" said I; and on the word his laughter ended, his color went.

"I am!" he answered, through his teeth. "Are you?"

Never was war carried more suddenly

into the enemy's country, or that enemy's breath more completely taken away than mine. What could I say? "As much as you are, I should hope!" was what I ultimately said.

The lad stood raking me with a steady fire from his blue eyes.

"I mean to marry her," he said, "if she will have me!"

There was no laughing at him. Though barely twenty, as I knew, he was man enough for any age, as we faced each other in my room, and a man that knew his own mind, into the bargain.

"But, my dear Bob," I ventured to remonstrate, "you are years too young for——"

He interrupted.

"That's my business. I am in earnest. What about you?"

I breathed again.

"My good fellow," said I, "you are at perfect liberty to give yourself away to me, but you really mustn't expect me to

do quite the same for you!"

"I expect precious little, I can tell you!" the lad rejoined hotly. "Not that it matters twopence, so long as you are not misled by anything I said the other day. I prefer to run straight with you; you can run as you like with me. Only I didn't want you to think that I was saying one thing and doing another. I meant all I said at the time, or thought I did, until you came along and made me look into myself more closely than I had done before. I won't say how you managed it. You will probably see for yourself. But I'm very much obliged to you, whatever happens. And now that we understand each other, there's no more to be said, and I'll clear out."

There was, indeed, no more to be said, and I made no attempt to detain him, for I did see for myself, only too clearly and precisely, how I had managed to precipitate the very thing I had come out from England expressly to prevent.

CHAPTER VIII.

I had quite forgotten one element which plays its part in most affairs of the affections. I mean the element of pique. Bob Evers, with the field to himself, had been sensible and safe enough; it was my intrusion, and nothing else, that had fanned his boyish flame into this premature conflagration. Of that I felt convinced. But Bob would not believe me if I told him so: and what else was there for me to tell him? To betray Catherine, and the secret of my presence, would simply hasten an irrevocable step. To betray Mrs. Lascelles, and her secret, would certainly not prevent it. Both courses were out of the question upon other grounds. Yet what else was left?

To speak out boldly to Mrs. Lascelles, to betray Catherine and myself to her?

I shrank from that; nor had I any right to reveal a secret which was not mine alone. What, then, was I to do? Here was this lad professedly on the point of proposing to this woman. It was useless to speak to the lad; it was impossible to speak to the woman. To be sure, she might not accept him; but the mere knowledge that she was to have the chance seemed enormously to increase my responsibility in the matter. As for the dilemma in which I now found myself, deservedly, if you please, there was no comparing it with any former phase of this affair.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave, When first we practice to deceive.

The hackneyed lines sprang unbidden, as though to augment my punishment; then, suddenly, I reflected that it was not in my own interest I had begun to practice my deceit; and the thought of Catherine braced me up, perhaps partly because I felt that it should. I put myself back into the fascinating little room in Elm Park Gardens. I saw the slender figure in the picture hat, I heard the half-humorous and half-pathetic voice.

After all, it was for Catherine I had undertaken this ridiculous mission; she was, therefore, my first, and had much better be my only, consideration. I could not run with the hare after hunting with the hounds. I should have liked to see Catherine's face if I had expressed any sympathy with the hare!

No; it was better to be unscrupulously stanch to one woman than weakly chivalrous toward both. My mind was made up by the end of dinner. There was only one chance now of saving the wretched Bob, or, rather, one way of setting to work to save him, and that was by actually adopting the course with which he had already credited me. He thought I was trying to cut him out. Well, I would try!

But, the more I thought of him, of -Mrs. Lascelles, of them both, the less sanguine I felt of success; for, had I been she-I could not help admitting it to myself-as lonely, as reckless, as unlucky, I would have married the generous young idiot on the spot! Not that my own marriage with Mrs. Lascelles was an end that I contemplated for a moment as I took my cynical resolve. And now I trust that I have made both my position and my intentions very plain, and have written myself down neither more of a fool nor less of a knave than circumstances, or my own infirmities, combined to make me at this juncture of my career.

The design was still something bolder than its execution, and, if Bob did not propose that night, it was certainly no fault of mine. I saw him with Mrs. Lascelles on the terrace after dinner. But I had neither the heart nor the face to thrust myself upon them. Everything was altered since Bob had shown me his hand; there were certain rules of the game which even I was now bound to observe. So I left him in undisputed possession of the perilous ground, and, being in a heavy glow from the strong air of the glacier, went early to my

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but her room, where I lay long enough without a wink, but quite prepared for Bob, with news of his engagement, at every

step in the corridor.

Next day was Sunday, and, chiefly, I am afraid, because there was neither blind nor curtain to my dormer window, and the morning sun streamed full upon my pillow. I got up and went to early service in the little tin Protestant church. It was wonderfully well attended. Ouinby was there, a head taller than anybody else, a thickness leaner, and some sizes smaller in heads. Belgrave Teale, fit for church parade, or for the afternoon act in one of his fashionable plays, took round the offertory bags, into which Mr. Justice race-course checks-Sankey-in dropped gold. It was not the sort of service at which one cares to look about one, but I was among the early comers, and I could not help it. Mrs. Lascelles, however, was there before me, whereas Bob Evers was not there at Nevertheless. I did not mean to walk back with her until I saw her walking very much alone, a sort of cynosure, even on the way from church, though humble and grave, and unconscious as any country maid. I watched her, with the rest, but in a spirit of my own. Some subtle change seemed to have come over her, also, in her turn. Had that rash lad really declared himself overnight, and had she actually accepted him? A new load seemed to rest upon her shoulders, a new anxiety, a new care; and, as if to confirm my idea, Mrs. Lascelles started and changed color as I came up with her.

"I didn't see you in church," she remarked, in her own natural fashion, when we had exchanged the ordinary

saluations.

"I am afraid you wouldn't expect to see me, Mrs. Lascelles."

"Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't; but I suppose," added Mrs. Lascelles, as her voice fell into a pensive but not a pathetic key, "I suppose it is you who are much more surprised at seeing me. I can't help it if you are, Captain Clephane. I am not really a religious person. I have not flown to that extreme, as yet. But it has been a comfort to me, sometimes; and so, sometimes, I go."

It was very simply said, but with a sigh at the end that left me wondering whether she was in any new need of spiritual comfort. Did she already find herself in the dilemma in which I had imagined her, and was it really a dilemma to her? New hopes began to chase my fears and were gaining upon them when a flannel suit on the sunlit steps caused a temporary check. There was Bob waiting for us, his hands in his pockets, a smile upon his face, but in the slope of his shoulders and the carriage of his head a certain indefinable but very visible attention and interest.

"Is Mrs. Evers a religious woman?" asked my companion, her step slowing ever so slightly as we approached.

"Not exactly; but she knows all about it." I replied.

"And doesn't believe very much? Then we shouldn't hit it off," exclaimed Mrs. Lascelles, "for I know nothing and believe all I can. Nevertheless, I'm not going to church again to-day."

The last words were in a sort of aside, and I afterward heard that Bob and Mrs. Lascelles had attended the later service together on the previous Sunday. But I guessed almost as much on the spot, and it put out of my head both the unjust assumption of the earlier remark concerning Lady Catherine and the contrast between them which Mrs. Lascelles could hardly afford to emphasize.

"Let's go somewhere else, instead—Zermatt—or anywhere else you like!" I suggested eagerly, but we were close to the steps, and, before she could reply, Bob had taken off his straw hat to Mrs. Lascelles and flung me a nod.

"How very energetic!" he cried. "I only hope it's a true indication of form, for I've got a scheme. Instead of putting in another chapel, I propose we stroll down to Zermatt for lunch, and come back by the train!"

Bob's proposal was made pointedly to Mrs. Lascelles, and, as pointedly, excluded me, but she stood between the two of us, with a charming smile of

good-humored perplexity.

"Now, what am I to say? Captain Clephane was in the very act of making the same suggestion!"

Bob glared on me for an instant, in spite of Eton and all his ancestors.

"We'll all go together!" I cried, before he could speak. "Why not?"

Nor was this mere unreasoning or good-natured impulse, since Bob could scarcely have present his suit in my presence, while I should certainly have done my best to retard it; still, it was rather a relief to me to see him shake his head, with some return of his natural grace.

"My idea was to show Mrs. Lascelles the gorge," said Bob, "but you can do that as well as I can; you can't miss it; besides, I've seen it, and I really ought to stay up here, as a matter of fact, for I'm on the track of a guide for the Mat-

terhorn."

We looked at him, narrowly, with one accord, but he betrayed no signs of desperate impulse, only those of "climbing fever," and I, at least, breathed again.

"But, if you want a guide," I added,

"Zermatt's full of them."

"I know," said he, "but it's a particular swell I'm after, and he hangs out up here in the season. They expect him back from a big trip any moment, and I really ought to be on the spot to snap him up."

So Bob retired, in very fair order, after all, and not without his laughing apologies to Mrs. Lascelles; but it was sad to me to note the spurious ring his laugh had now. It was like the death-

knell of the simple and the single heart that it had been my lot, if not my mission, to poison and to warp. But I have said enough about my odious task, and will pass on rapidly to its fulfillment, which now seemed close at hand

It was not, in fact, so imminent as I supposed, for the descent into Zerman is somewhat too steep for the conduct of a necessarily delicate debate. Sound legs go down at a compulsory run, and my companion was continually waiting for me to catch up with her, only to shoot ahead again, perforce. Or the path was too narrow for us to walk abreast, and you cannot become confidential in single file; and the noise of falling waters drowned our voices, when we stood together on that precarious platform in the cool depths of the gorge; otherwise, such an admirable setting for the scene that I foresaw.

Then, it was a beautiful walk in itself, with its short tacks in the precipitous pine woods above, its sudden plunge into the sunken gorge below, its final sweep across the green valley beyond, and it was all so new to us both that there were impressions to exchange or to compare at every turn. In fine, with all the will in the world, it was quite impossible to get in a word about Bob before luncheon at the Monte Rosa; and, by that time, I, for one, was in no mood to introduce so

difficult a topic.

But an opportunity there came, an opportunity such as even I could not neglect; on the contrary, I made too much of it, as the sequel will show. It was in the little museum, which every tourist goes to see. We had shuddered over the gruesome relics of the first and worst catastrophe on the Matterhorn, and were looking in silence upon the primitive portraits of the two younger Englishmen that lost their lives on that historic occasion. They had both been of about the same age as Bob Evers, and I pointed this out to my companion. If

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was a particularly obvious remark to make, but Mrs. Lascelles turned her face quickly to mine, and the color left it, in the half-lit, half-haunted little room, which we happened to have all to ourselves.

"Don't let him go up, Captain Cle-

phane; don't let him, please!"

"Do you mean Bob Evers?" I asked, to gain time while I considered what to say, for the intensity of her manner was

quite a surprise to me.

"You know I do," said Mrs. Lascelles impatiently; "don't let him go up the Matterhorn to-night, or to-morrow morning, or whenever it is that he means to start."

"But, my dear Mrs. Lascelles, who am I, to prevent that young gentleman from doing what he likes?"

"I thought you were more or less re-

lated?"

"Rather less than more."

"But, aren't you very intimate with his mother?"

I had to meet a very penetrating look. "I was once."

"Well, then, for his mother's sake, you ought to do your best to keep him out of danger, Captain Clephane."

It was my turn to repay the look which I had just received. No doubt I did so with only too much interest; no doubt I was equally clumsy of speech; but it was my opportunity, and something or other must be said.

"Quite so, Mrs. Lascelles! And, for his mother's sake," said I, "I not only will do—I have already done—my best to keep the lad out of harm's way. He is the apple of her eye; they are simply all the world to each other. It would break her heart if anything happened to him—anything—if she were to lose him, in any sense of the word!"

I waited a moment, thinking she would speak, prepared, on my side, to be as explicit as she pleased; but Mrs. Lascelles only looked at me, with her mouth tight shut and her eyes wide

open; and I concluded, somewhat uneasily, I will confess, that she saw for herself what I meant.

"As for the Matterhorn," I went on, "that, I believe, is not such a very dangerous exploit in these days. There are permanent chains and things where there used to be polished precipices. It makes the real mountaineers rather scornful; any one with legs and a head, they will tell you, can climb the Matterhorn nowadays. If I had the legs, I'd go with him, like a shot."

"To share the danger, I suppose?"

"And the sport."

"Ah," said Mrs. Lascelles, "and the sport, of course! I had forgotten that!"

Yet I did not perceive that I had been found out, for nothing was further from my mind than to continue the hint to which I had stooped in passing a few moments before. It had served its purpose, I conceived. I had given my veiled warning: it never occurred to me that Mrs. Lascelles might be indulging in a veiled retort. I thought she was annoyed at the hint that I had given her. I began to repent of it myself. It had quite spoiled our day, and so many and long were the silences, as we wandered from little shop to little shop, and finally with relief to the train, that I had plenty of time to remember how much we had found to talk about all the morning.

But matters were coming to a head in spite of me, for Bob Evers waylaid us on our return, and, with hardly a word to Mrs. Lascelles, straightway followed me to my room. He was pale, with a suppressed anger, which flared up even as he closed my door behind him, but though his honest face was now in flames, he still kept control of his tongue.

"I want you to lend me one of those sticks of yours," he said quietly; "the heaviest, for choice!"

"What the devil for?" I demanded, thinking, for the moment, of no shoulders but my own. "To give that bounder Quinby the licking he deserves!" cried Bob. "To give it him now, at once, when the post comes in, and the place is full of people to see. Do you know what he's been saying and spreading about the place?"

"No," I answered, my heart sinking within me. "What has he been say-

ing?"

The color altered on Bob's face, altered and softened to a veritable blush,

and his eyes avoided mine.

"I'm ashamed to tell you, it makes me so sick," he said disgustedly, "He's been spreading a report about Mrs. Lascelles. It has nothing on earth to do with me. He only heard it himself this morning, by letter, but the brute has made good use of his time! I got wind of it only an hour or two ago, quite by accident, and I haven't seen the fellow since; but, either he explains himself to my satisfaction, or I make an example of him before the hotel. It's a thing I never dreamed of doing in my life, and I'm sorry the poor beast is such a scarecrow, but it's a duty to punish that sort of crime against a woman, and now I'm sure you'll lend me one of your sticks. I am only sorry I didn't bring one with me."

"But wait a bit, my dear fellow," said I, for he was actually holding out his hand. "You have still to tell me what the report was."

"Divorce!" he answered, in a tragic voice. "Clephane, the fellow says she was divorced in India, and that it was—that it was her fault!"

He turned away his face. It was in a flame.

"And are you going to thrash Quinby for saying that?"

"If he sticks to it, I most certainly am!" said Bob.

"I should think twice about it, Bob, if I were you!"

"My dear man, what else do you suppose I have been thinking of all the afternoon?" "It will make a fresh scandal, you see."

"I can't help that."

Bob shut his mouth, with a self-willed snap.

"But what good will it do?"

"A liar will be punished, that's all! It's no use talking, Clephane; my mind is made up."

"But, are you so sure it's a lie?" I was obliged to say at last, reluctantly enough, yet with a wretched feeling that I might just as well have said it in the beginning.

"Sure?" he echoed, his innocent eyes widening before mine. "Why, of course, I'm sure! You don't know what friends we've been; she's told me lots of things. She never would have hidden that!"

Then I told him that it was true, and how I knew that it was true, and my reason for having kept all that knowledge to myself until now.

"I could not give her away, even to you, Bob, nor yet tell you that I had known her before, for you would have been certain to ask when, and how; and it was in her first husband's time, and under his name."

It was a comfort to be quite honest for once with one of them, and it is a relief even now to remember that I was absolutely honest with Bob Evers about He said, almost at once, that he would have done the same himself, and, even as he spoke, his whole manner changed toward me. His face had darkened at my unexpected confirmation of the odious rumor, but already it was beginning to lighten toward me, as if my attitude was the one redeeming feature in the new aspect of affairs. He even thanked me for my late reserve, as if a kindness to Mrs. Lascelles was already the greatest possible kindness to

"But I am glad you have told me now," he added, "for it explains many things. I was inclined to look upon you, Cle ing you erate in knew h thing. shan't a you bea

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my kep you, Clephane—you won't mind my telling you now—as something of a deliberate interloper! But all the time you knew her first, and that alters everything. I hope to beat you out yet, but I shan't any longer bear you a grudge if you beat me out!"

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"My dear fellow," I cried, "do you mean to say this makes no difference?"

"It does to Quinby. I must keep my hands off him, I suppose, though, to my mind, he deserves his licking all the more."

"But does it make no difference to you? My dear boy, at your age, can you seriously think of marrying a woman married twice already, and once divorced?"

"I didn't know that when I thought of it first," he answered doggedly, "and I am not going to let it make a difference now. Do you suppose I would stand away from her because of anything that's past and over? Do they stand away from us for—that sort of thing?"

Of course, I said that was rather different, as if there could not be two opinions on the point.

"But, Duncan, you know it's the very last thing you're dreaming of doing yourself!"

And again I argued, as feebly as you please, that it was quite different in my case, that I was a good ten years older than he, and not the only son of my mother.

Bob stiffened on the spot.

"My mother must take care of herself," said he; "and I," he added, "I must take care of myself, if you don't mind. I hope you won't, for you've been most awfully good to me, you know! I never thought so until these last few minutes, but now I shan't forget it, no matter how it all turns out!"

CHAPTER IX.

Well, I made a belated attempt to earn my young friend's good opinion. I kept out of his way after dinner, and

went in search of Quinby, instead. I felt I had a crow of my own to pluck with this gentleman, who owed to my timely intervention a far greater immunity than he deserved. It was in the little billiard room I found him, pachydermatously applauding the creditable attempts of Sir John Sankey at the cannon game, and as studiously ignoring the excellent shots of an undistinguished clergyman who was beating the judge. Quinby made room for me beside him, with a civility which might have caused me some compunction, but I repaid him by coming promptly to my point.

"What's this report about Mrs. Lascelles?" I asked, not angrily at all, but with a certain contemptuous interest, if a man can judge of his own outward manner from his inner temper at the

Quinby favored me with a narrow, though a sidelong, look; the room was very full, and in the general chit-chat, punctuated by the constant clicking of the heavy balls, there was very little danger of our being overheard. But Quinby was careful to lower his voice.

"It's perfectly true," said he, "if you mean about her being divorced."

"Yes, that was what I heard; but who started the report?"

"Who started it? You may well ask! Who starts anything, in a place like this? Ah, good shot, Sir John; good shot!"

"Never mind the good shots, Quinby. I really want to talk to you about this. I shan't keep you long."

"Talk away, then. I am listening."

"Mrs. Lascelles and I are rather friends."

"So I can see."

"Very well, then. I want to know who started all this. It may be perfectly true, as you say, but who found it out? If you can't tell me, I must ask somebody else."

The ruddy, Alpine coloring had sud-

denly become accentuated in the case of Ouinby.

"As a matter of fact," said he, "it was I who first heard it, quite by chance. You certainly can't blame me for that, Clephane."

"Of course not," said I encourag-

ingly.

"Well, unfortuately, I let it out; and you know how things get about in a hotel."

"It was unfortunate," I agreed. "But how on earth did you come to hear?"

Quinby hummed and hawed; he had heard from a soldier friend, a man that had known her in India, a man I knew myself; in fact, the very sapper that had telegraphed to Quinby to secure my room for me. I ought to have been disarmed by the coincidence, but I recalled out initial conversation, about India and that sapper and Mrs. Lascelles, and I could not consider it a coincidence at all.

"You don't mean to tell me," said I, aping the surprise I might have felt, "that our friend wrote and gave poor Mrs. Lascelles away to you of his own accord?"

But Quimby did not vouchsafe an an-

"Hard luck, Sir John!" cried he, as the judge missed an easy cannon, leaving his opponent a still easier one, which lost him the game. I proceeded to press my question, in a somewhat stronger form, though still with all the suavity at my command.

"Surely," I urged, "you must have written to ask him about her first?"

"That's my business, I fancy," said Quinby, with a peculiarly aggressive specimen of his nasal snigger.

"Quite," I agreed; "but do you really consider it your business also to inquire deliberately into the past life of a lady whom you know only by sight, and to spread the result of your inquiries broadcast in the hotel? Is that your idea of chivalry? I shall ask Sir John Sankey whether it is his," I added, as

the judge joined us, with genial condescension, and I recollected that his proverbial harshness toward the male offender was redeemed by an extraordinary sympathy with the women. Thereupon, I laid a general case before Sir John, asking him point-blank whether he considered such conduct as Quinby's—I did not say whose conduct—either justifiable in itself or conducive to the enjoyment of a holiday community like ours.

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"It depends," said the judge, cocking a critical eye on the now-furious Quinby. "I am afraid we most of in enjoy our scandal, and, for my part, I always like to see a humbug catch it hot. But, if the scandal's about a woman, and if it's an old scandal, and if she's a lonely woman, that quite alters the case, and, in my opinion, the author of it deserves all he gets."

At this, Quinby burst out, with an unrestrained heat that did not lower him in my estimation, though the whole of his tirade was directed exclusively against I had been talking "at him," he declared. I might as well have been straightforward while I was about it. He was not afraid to take the responsibility for anything he might have said. It was perfectly true, to begin with The so-called Mrs. Lascelles, who was such a friend of mine, had been the wife of a German Jew in Lahore, who had divorced her on her elopement with a Major Lascelles, whom she had left, in his turn, and whose name she had not the smallest right to bear. Ouinby exercised some restraint in the utterance of these calumnies, or the whole room must have heard them, but, even as it was, we had more listeners than the judge when my turn came.

"I won't give you the lie, Quinby, because I am quite sure you don't know you are telling one," said I; "but, as a matter of fact, you are giving currency to two. In the first place, this lady is Mrs. Lascelles, for the major did marry

her; in the second place, Major Lascelles is dead."

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"And how do you know?" inquired Quinby, with a touch of genuine surprise to mitigate an insolent disbelief.

"You forget," said I, "that it was in India I knew your own informant. I can only say that my information in all this matter is a good deal better than his. I knew Mrs. Lascelles also quite well out there! I knew the other side of her case. It doesn't seem to have struck you, Quinby, that such a woman must have suffered a good deal before and after taking such a step. Or I don't suppose you would have spread yourself to make her suffer a little more."

I still consider that a charitable view of his behavior, but Quinby was of another opinion, which he expressed, with his offensive little laugh, as he lifted his long body from the settee.

"That is what one gets for securing a room for a man one doesn't know!" said he.

"On the contrary," I retorted, "I haven't forgotten that, and I have saved you something because of it. I have saved you no less than a thrashing from a stronger man than myself, who is even more indignant with you than I am, and who wanted to borrow one of my sticks for the purpose!"

"And it would have served him perfectly right," was the old judge's comment, when the mischiefmaker had departed, without returning my Parthian shot. "I suppose you meant young Evers, Captain Clephane?"

"I did, indeed, Sir John. I had to tell him the truth in order to restrain him"

The old judge raised his eyebrows. "Then you hadn't to tell him it before? You are certainly consistent, and I much admire your position as regards the lady. But I am not so sure that it was altogether fair toward the lad. It is one thing to stand up for the poor soul, my dear sir, but it would be an-

other thing to let a nice boy like that go and marry her!"

So that was the opinion of this ripe, old citizen of the world! It ought not to have irritated me as it did. It would be Catherine's opinion, of course; but a dispassionate view was not to be expected from her. I had not hitherto thought otherwise myself, but now I experienced a perverse inclination to take the opposite side. Was it so utterly impossible for a woman with this woman's record to make a good wife to some man yet? I did not admit it for an instant; he would be a lucky man who won so healthy and so good a heart; thus I argued to myself, with Mrs. Lascelles in my mind, and nobody else. But Bob Evers was not a man. I was not sure that he was out of his teens, and to think of him was to think at once with Sir John Sankey and all the rest. Yes, yes, it would be madness and suicide in such a youth; there could be no two opinions about that. And yet I felt indignant at the mildest expression of that which I myself could not deny.

Such was my somewhat chaotic state of mind when I had fled the billiard-room, in my turn, and put on my overcoat and cap to commune with myself outside. Nobody did justice to Mrs. Lascelles. It was terribly hard to do her justice. I did not see how I was to be the exception and prove the rule. My brief was for Bob, and there was an end of it. It was foolish to worry, especially on such a night.

The moon had waxed since my arrival, and now hung almost round and altogether dazzling in the little sky the mountains left us. Yet I had the terrace all to myself; the magnificent voice of our latest celebrity had drawn everybody else indoors, or under the open drawing-room windows, through which it poured out into the glorious night. And, in the vivid moonlight, the mountains seemed to have gathered very close about the little human hive upon their

heights, to be even listening to the grand, rich notes that had some right to break their own grand silence.

> "Though poor be the chamber, Come here, here and adore, Where the Lord of Heaven Hath to mortals given Life forevermore."

So sang the splendid voice, to that fine refrain of which the words give no inkling, and I was standing entranced myself, an outpost of the audience, underneath the windows, whose fringe I could just see round the farthest angle of the hotel, when Bob Evers ran down the steps and came toward me, in such a guise that I could not swear to him till the last yard.

"Don't say a word," he whispered ex-

citedly. "I'm just off!"

"Off where?" I gasped, for he had changed into full mountaineering garb, and there was his greased face beaming in the moonlight, and the blue spectacles twinkling about his hatband, at half past nine at night!

"Up the Matterhorn!"
"At this time of night?"

"It is late, and that's why I want it kept quiet. I don't want any fuss or advice. I've got a couple of excellent guides waiting for me just below by the shoemaker's hut. I told you I was on their track. Well, it was to-night or never, as far as they were concerned, they are so tremendously full up. So to-night it is."

"But I thought everybody went up to the Cabane overnight, and started fresh

from there in the morning."

"Most people do, but it's as broad as it's long," declared Bob airily, rapidly, and with the same unwonted excitement, born, as I thought, of his unwonted enterprise. "You have a ripping moonlight walk, instead of a so-called night's rest in a frowzy hut. We shall get our breakfast there instead, and I expect to start fresher than if I had slept there, and been wakened at two o'clock in the

morning. That's all settled, anyhow, and you can look for me on top through the telescope after breakfast. I shall be back before dark, and then——"

"Well, what then?" I asked, for Bob had made a significant and yet irresolute pause, as if he could not quite bring himself to tell me something that was

on his mind.

"Well," he echoed nonchalantly, at last, "as a matter of fact, to-morrow night I am to know my fate. I have asked Mrs. Lascelles to marry me, and she hasn't said no, but I am giving her till to-morrow night. That's all, Clephane. I thought it a fair thing to let you know. If you want to waltz in and try your luck while I'm gone, there's nothing on earth to prevent you, and it might be most satisfactory to everybody, As a matter of fact, I'm only going so as to get over the time and keep out of the way; of course, I meant to rush the Matterhorn while I am here, but, between ourselves, that's my only reason for rushing in to-night."

I wondered whether it was his only reason. Had he no bovish vision of quick promotion in the lady's heart, no primitive desire to show his mettle out of hand, to set her trembling while he did or died? He had, I thought, and he had not; that shining face could only have reflected a single and a candid heart. But it is these very natures, so simple and sweet-hearted, and transparent, that are least to be trusted on the subject of their own motives and emotions, for they are the soonest deceived, not only by others, but in themselves. Or, so I think, and even then reflected, as I shook this dear lad's hand by the side parapet of the moonlit terrace and watched him run down into the shadows of the fir trees and so out of my sight, with two dark and stalwart figures that detached themselves from the shadows of the shoemaker's hut. A third figure mounted to where I stood, listening to the easy, swinging, confident steps, as they fee ear; it had sho my boo exchan "Do asked.

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he w forb was but chor they fell fainter and fainter upon the ear; it was the shoemaker himself that had shod my two sticks with spikes and my boots with formidable nails. We exchanged a few words.

"Do you know those two guides?" I

asked.

"Very well, monsieur."
"Are they good guides?"
"The very best, monsieur."

CHAPTER X.

"Is that you?"

It was an hour or so later, but still I sat ruminating upon the parapet, within a yard or two of the spot where I had first accosted Bob Evers and Mrs. Lascelles. I had retraced the little sequence of events, paltry enough in themselves, yet of a certain symmetry and no slight importance as a whole. I had attacked and defended my own conduct down to that hour, and, during my unprofitable deliberations, the night had aged and altered, as it were, behind my back. There was no more music in the drawing-room. There were no more people under the drawing-room windows. The lights in all the lower windows were not what they had been; it was the bedroom tiers that were illuminated now. But I did not realize that there was less light outside, until I awoke to the fact that Mrs. Lascelles was peering tentatively toward me and putting her question in a very uncertain

"That depends on who I am supposed to be," I answered, laughing, as I rose to put my personality beyond doubt.

"How stupid of me!" nervously laughed Mrs. Lascelles, in her turn. "I

thought it was Mr. Evers!"

I had hard work to suppress an exclamation. So he had not told her what he was going to do, although he had not forbidden me to tell her! Poor Bob was more subtle than I had supposed, but it was a simple subtlety, a strange chord, but still in key with his character.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," said I. "But I am afraid you won't see any more of Bob Evers to-night."

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs.

Lascelles suspiciously.

"I wonder he didn't tell you," said I, to gain time in which to decide how to make the best use of such an unforeseen opportunity.

"Well, he didn't; so, please, will you,

Captain Clephane?"

"Bob Evers," said I, with befitting gravity, "is climbing the Matterhorn at this moment."

"Never!"

"At least, he has started."

"When did he start?"

"An hour or more ago, with a couple of guides."

"He told you, then?"

"Only just as he was starting."

"Was it a sudden idea?"
"More or less, I think."

I waited for the next question, but that was the last. Just then the interloping cloud floated clear of the moon, and I saw that my companion was wrapped up as on the earlier night, in the same unconventional combination of rain coat and golf cape; but now the hood hung down, and the sudden rush

of moonlight showed me a face as full of sheer perplexity and annoyance as I could have hoped to find it, and as free from deeper feeling.

"The silly boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Lasceiles, at last. "I suppose it really is pretty safe, Captain Clephane?" "Safer than most dangerous things, I believe: and they are the safest, as you

believe; and they are the safest, as you know, because you take more care. He has a couple of excellent guides; the chance of getting them was partly why he went. In all human probability we shall have him back safe and sound, and frightfully pleased with himself, long before this time to-morrow. Meanwhile, Mrs. Lascelles," I continued, with the courage of my opportunity, "it is a very good chance for me to speak to

you about our friend Bob. I have wanted to do so for some little time."

"Have you, indeed?" said Lascelles coldly.

"I have," I answered imperturbably, "and if it wasn't so late I should ask for a hearing now."

"Oh, let us get it over, by all means." But as she spoke Mrs, Lascelles glanced over the shoulder that she shrugged so contemptuously, toward the lights in the bedroom windows, most of

which were wide open. "We could walk toward the zigzags," I suggested. "There is a seat within a hundred yards, if you don't think it too cold to sit: but, in any case, I needn't keep you many minutes. Bob Evers," I continued, "paid me the compliment of confiding in me somewhat freely before he started on this hare-brained expedition of his."

"So it appears."

"Ah! but he didn't only tell me what he was going to do; he told me why he was doing it," said I, as we sauntered on our way side by side. "It was difficult to believe." I added, when I had waited long enough for the question upon which I had reckoned.

"Indeed?"

"He said he had proposed to you." I waited, but never a word.

"That child!" I added, with deliberate scorn.

But a further pause was broken only by my companion's measured steps and my own awkward shuffle.

"That baby!" I insisted.

"Did you tell him he was one, Captain Clephane?" asked Mrs. Lascelles dryly, but drawn at last.

"I spared his feelings. But can it

be true, Mrs. Lascelles?"

"It is true."

"And it is a fact that you didn't give him a definite answer?"

"I don't know what business it is of yours," said Mrs. Lascelles bluntly; "and, since he seems to have told you everything, neither do I know why you should ask me. However, it is quite true that I did not finally refuse him on the spot."

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This carefully qualified confirmation should have afforded me abundant satisfaction. I was over-eager in the matter, however, and I cried out impetu-

ously:

"But you will?" "Will what?"

"Refuse the boy!"

We had reached the seat, but neither of us sat down. Mrs. Lascelles appeared to be surveying me with equal resentment and defiance. I, having shot my bolt, did my best to look conciliatory.

"Why should I refuse him?" she asked, at length, with less emotion and more dignity than her bearing had led me to expect. "You seem so sure about

it !"

"He is such a boy-such an utter child-as I said just now." I was conscious of the weakness of saying it again, and it alone, but my strongest arguments were too strong for direct statement.

This one, however, was not unfruitful in the end.

"And I!" said Mrs. Lascelles. "How old do you think I am? Thirty-five?"

"Of course not," said I, with obvious gallantry. "But I doubt if Bob is even twenty."

"Well, then, you won't believe me, but I was married before I was his age, and I am just six-and-twenty now!"

It was a surprise to me. I did not doubt it for a moment; one never did doubt Mrs. Lascelles. It was easy enough to believe-so much I told her -if one looked upon the woman as she was, and only difficult in the prejudicial light of her matrimonial record. I did not add that.

"But you are a good deal older," I could not help saying, "in the ways of the world, and it is there that Bob is

such an infant."

"But I thought an Eton boy was a man of the world?" said Mrs. Lascelles, quoting me against myself with the utmost readiness.

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"Ah! In some things," I had to concede. "Only in some things, however."

"Well," she rejoined, "of course I know what you mean by the other things. They matter to your mind much more than mere age, even if I had been fifteen years older, instead of five or six. It's the old story, from the man's point of view. You can live anything down, but you won't let us. There is no fresh start for a woman; there never was, and never will be."

I protested that this was unfair.

"I never said that or anything like it, Mrs. Lascelles!"

"No, you don't say it, but you think it!" she cried back "It is the one thing you have in your mind. I was unhappy, I did wrong, so I can never be happy, I can never do right! I am unfit to marry again, to marry a good man, even if he loves me, even if I love him!"

"I neither say nor think anything of the kind," I reiterated, and with some slight effect this time. Mrs. Lascelles put no more absurdities into my mouth.

"Then what do you say?" she demanded, her deep voice vibrant with scornful indignation, though there were tears in it, too.

"I think he will be a lucky fellow that gets you," I said, and meant every word, as I looked at her well in the moonlight, with her shining eyes and curling lip and fighting flush.

"Thank you, Captain Clephane!"

And I thought I was to be honored with a contemptuous courtesy; but I was not.

"He ought to be a man, however," I went on, "and not a boy, and, still less, the only child of a woman with whom you would never get on!"

"So you are as sure of that," exclaimed Mrs. Lascelles, "as of everything else!" It seemed, however, to

soften her, or, at least, to change the current of her thoughts. "Yet you get on with her?" she added, with a wistful intonation.

I could not deny that I got on with Catherine Evers.

"You are even fond of her?"

"Ouite fond."

"Then do you find me such a disagreeable person that she and I couldn't possibly hit it off, in your opinion?"

"It isn't that, Mrs. Lascelles," said I, almost wearily. "You must know what it is. You want to marry her son—"

Mrs. Lascelles smiled.

"Well, let us suppose you do. That would be quite enough for Lady Catherine. No matter who you were, or how beautiful, how incomparable in every way, she had rather die than let you marry him at his age. I don't say she's wrong—I don't say she's right. I give you the plain fact for what it is worth; you would find her from the first a clever and determined adversary, a regular little lioness with her cub, and absolutely intolerant on that particular point."

I could see Catherine as I spoke, but the vision faded before the moonlit reality of Mrs. Lascelles, laughing to herself like a great, naughty, pretty child.

"I really think I must marry him," she said, "and see what happens!"

"If you do," I answered, in all seriousness, "you will begin by separating mother and son, and end by making both their lives miserable, and bringing the last misery into your own."

Either my tone impressed her, or the covert reminder in my last words; for the bold smile faded from her face, and she looked longer and more searchingly into mine than she had done as yet.

"You know Mrs. Evers exceedingly well," Mrs. Lascelles remarked.

"I did, years ago," I guardedly replied.

"Do you mean to say you have not seen her for years?"

I did not altogether like her tone. Yet, it was so downright and straightforward, it was hard to be the very reverse in answer to it, and I shied idiotically at the honest lie. I had quite lost sight both of Bob and his mother, I declared, from the day I went to India until now.

"You mean until you came out here?"

persisted Mrs. Lascelles.

"Until the other day," I said, relying on a carefully affirmative tone to close the subject. There was a pause. I began to hope I had succeeded.

"I believe," said Mrs. Lascelles, "that you saw Mrs. Evers in town before you

started."

It was too late to lie.

"As a matter of fact," I answered,

easily, "I did."

I built no hopes on the pause which followed that. Somehow, I had my face to the moon, and Mrs. Lascelles had her back. I knew her scrutiny of me was more critical than ever.

"How funny of Bob never to have told me!" she said.

"Told you what?"

"That you saw his mother just before

"I didn't tell him," I said, at length.
"That was funny of you, Captain

Clephane."

"On the contrary," I argued, with the impudence which was now my only chance, "it was only natural. Bob was rather raw with his friend Kennerley, you see. You knew about that?"

"Oh, yes."

"And why they fell out?"

"Yes."

"Well, he might have thought the other fellow had been telling tales, and that I had come out to have an eye on him, if he had known that I happened to see his mother just before I started."

There was another pause; but now I was committed to an attitude and pre-

pared for the worst.

"Perhaps there would have been some truth in it?" suggested Mrs. Lascelles. "Perhaps," I agreed, "a little."

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The pause now was the longest of all. It had no terrors for me. Another cloud had come between us and the moon. I was sorry for that. I felt that I was missing something. Even the fine upstanding figure before me was no longer sharp enough to be expressive.

"I have been harking back," explained Mrs. Lascelles eventually. "Now I think I follow perfectly. You saw his mother, you heard a report, and you volunteered, or, at least, consented to come out and keep an eye on the dear boy, as you say yourself. Am I not more or less right so far, Captain Clephane?"

Her tone was frozen honey.
"More or less," I was forced to ad-

mit.

"Of course, I don't know what report that miserable young man may have carried home with him. I don't want to know. But I can guess. One does not stay in hotel after hotel without getting a pretty shrewd idea of the way people talk about one. I know the sort of things they have been saying here. You would hear them for yourself, no doubt, Captain Clephane, as soon as you arrived!"

I admitted that I had, but reminded Mrs. Lascelles that the first person I had spoken to was also the greatest gossip in the hotel. She paid no attention to the remark, but stood looking at me again, with the look that I could

never quite see to read.

"And then," she went on, "you found out who it was, and you remembered all about me, and your worst fears were confirmed. That must have been an interesting moment. I wonder how you felt. Did it never occur to you to speak plainly to anybody?"

"I wasn't going to give you away," I

said stolidly.

"Yet, you see, it would have made no

difference if you had. Did you seriously think it would make much difference, Captain Clephane, to a really chivalrous young man?" I bowed my head to the well-earned taunt. "But," she went on, "there was no need for you to speak to Mr. Evers. You might have spoken to me. Why did you not do that?"

"Because I didn't want to quarrel with you," I answered, quite honestly; "because I enjoyed your society too

much myself."

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"That was very nice of you," said Mrs. Lascelles, with a sudden, although a subtle, return of the good nature which had always attracted me. "If it is sincere," she added, as an apparent afterthought.

"I am perfectly sincere now."

"Then what do you think I should do?" she asked me, in the soft, new tone, which actually flattered me with the idea that she was making up her mind to take my advice.

"Refuse this lad!"

"And then?" she almost whispered.

"And then—"

I hesitated. I found it hard to say what I thought, hard even upon myself. We had been good friends. I admired the woman cordially; her society was pleasant to me, as it always had been. Nevertheless, we had just engaged in a duel of no friendly character, and now that we seemed of a sudden to have become friends again, it was the harder to give her the only advice that I considered compatible alike with my duty and the varied demands of the situation. If she took it, as she seemed disposed to do, the immediate loss would be mine. and I foresaw, besides, a much more disagreeable reckoning with Bob Evers than the one now approaching an amicable conclusion. I should have to stay behind to face the music of his wrath alone. Still, at the risk of appearing brutal, I made my proposal in plain terms; but, to minimize that risk. I ventured to take the lady's hand, and was glad to find the familiarity permitted in the same friendly spirit in which it was indulged.

"I would have no 'and then,' if I were you," I said. "I should refuse him under such circumstances that he couldn't possibly bother you or himself about you again. Now is your opportunity."

"Is it?" she asked, still in a whisper, as I paused. I fancied there was a tremor in the firm, warm hand in mine.

"The best of opportunities," I replied, "if you are not too wedded to this place and can tear yourself away from the rest of us." Her hand lay loose in mine. "Mrs. Lascelles, I should go away to-morrow morning"—her hand fell away altogether—"while he is still up the Matterhorn. And I shouldn't let him know where. I shouldn't give him a chance of finding out—"

A sudden peal of laughter cut me short. I could not have believed it came from my companion. But no other soul was near us, though I looked all ways. It was the merriest laughter imaginable, only the merriment was harsh and

hard.

"Oh, thank you, Captain Clephane! You are too delicious! I saw it coming; I only wondered whether I could contain myself until it came. Yet, I could hardly believe that even you would commit yourself to that finishing touch of impudence! Certainly, it is an opportunity, his being out of the way. You were not long in making use of it, were you? It will amuse him when he comes down, though it may open his eyes. I shall tell him everything, I give you warning. Every single thing that you have had the insolence to tell me!"

She had caught up her skirts from the ground, she had half turned away from me, toward the hotel. The false merriment had died out of her voice. The true indignation remained, ringing in every accent of her honest voice, and drawn up in every inch of the tall,

straight figure. I do not remember whether the moon was hid or shining at the moment. I only know that my lady's eyes shone bright enough for me to see them then and ever after, bright and dry with a scor that burned too hot for tears; and that I admired her even while she scorned me, as I had never thought to admire any woman but one, but this woman best of all.

We both stood intent, some seconds, looking our last upon each other, if I was wise. Then I lifted my hat, and offered my congratulations, more sincere than they sounded, to her and to Bob.

"Did I tell you why he is going up?" I added. "It is to pass the time until he knows his fate. If only we could let him know it now!"

Mrs. Lascelles glanced toward the mountain, and my eyes followed hers. A great cloud hid the grim outstanding summit.

"If only you had prevented him from going!" she cried back at me, in a last reproach; and to me her tone was conclusive, as she turned. I followed her very slowly and without a word, for now was I utterly and deservedly undone.

CHAPTER XI.

It was a chilly morning, with rather a high wind. From the haze about the mountains of the Zermatt valley, all that I could see from my bedroom window, it occurred to me that I might look in vain for the Matterhorn from the other side of the hotel. It was still visible, however, when I came down, a white cloud wound about its middle like a cloth, and the hotel telescope already trained upon its summit from the shelter of the glass veranda.

"See anybody?" I asked of a man that sat at the telescope as if his eye was frozen to the lens. He might have been witnessing the most exciting adventure, where the naked eye saw only rock and snow and cold gray sky; but he rose at last, with a shake of the head—a great, gaunt man, with kind, keen eyes and the skin peeled off his nose.

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"No," said he, "I can't see anybody, and I'm very glad I can't. It's about as bad a morning for it as you could possibly have; yet, last night was so fine that some fellows might have got up to the hut, and been foolish enough not to come down again. But have a look for yourself."

"Oh, thanks," said I, considerably relieved at what I heard, "but if you can't see anybody I'm sure I can't. You have done it yourself, I dare say?"

The gaunt man smiled demurely and the keen eyes twinkled in his flayed face. He was, indeed, a palpable mountaineer!

"What! The Matterhorn?" said he, lowering his voice and looking about him as if on the point of some discreditable admission. "Oh, yes, I've done the Matterhorn; back and front and both sides, with and without guides; but everybody has in these days. It's nothing when you know the ropes and chains and things. They've got everything up there now except an iron staircase. Still, I should be sorry to tackle it to-day, even if they had a lift!"

"Do you think guides would?" I asked, less reassured than I had felt at first.

"It depends on the guides. They are not the first to turn back, as a rule; but they like wind and mist even less than we do. The guides know what they mean."

I now understood the special disadvantages of the day and realized the obvious dangers. I could only hope that either Bob Evers or his guides had shown the one kind of courage required by the occasion, the moral courage of turning back. But I was not at all sure of Bob. His stimulus was not of the single-minded, level-headed mountaineer; in his romantic exaltation, he was

capable of hailing the very perils as so many more means of grace in the sight of Mrs. Lascelles; yet, without doubt, he would have repudiated any such incentive and that in all the sincerity of his simple heart. He did not know himself as I knew him.

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My fears were soon confirmed. Returning to the glass veranda, after the stock breakfast of the Swiss hotel, I found the telescope the center of an ominous crowd, on whose fringe hovered my new friend, the mountaineer.

"We were wrong," he muttered to me. "Some fools are up there, after all."

"How many?" I asked, quickly.

"I don't know. There's no getting near the telescope now, and won't be till the clouds blot them out altogether."

I looked out at the Matterhorn. The loin cloth of cloud had shaken itself out into a flowing robe, from which only the brown skull of the mountain protruded in its white skullcap.

"There are three of them," announced a nasal voice, from the heart of the little crowd. "A great, long chap and two guides."

"He can't possibly know that," remarked the mountaineer to me, "but let's hope it is so."

"They's as plain as pikestaffs," continued Quinby, whose bent, blond head I now distinguished, as he occupied the congenial post of Sister Anne. "They seem stuck. No, they're getting up on the snow slope, and the front man is cutting steps."

"Then they're all right for the present," said the mountaineer. "It's the getting down that's ticklish."

"You can see the rope between them. What a wind there must be! It's bent out taut like a bow. You can see it against the snow, and they're bending themselves more than forty-five degrees to meet it."

"All very well going up," grimly murmured the mountaineer.

I turned into the hall. It was quite I had hoped I might see something of Mrs. Lascelles; she was not one of those in the glass veranda. I looked into the drawing-room, but neither was she there. Returning to the empty hall, I passed a minute peering through the locked glass door of the pigeonholes in which the careful concierge files the unclaimed letters. There was nothing for me in the C pigeonhole: but next box but one, under E, there lay on the very top a letter that caught my eye and more. It had not been through any post. It was a note directed to "R. Evers, Esq.," in a hand I knew instinctively to be that of Mrs. Lascelles, though I had never seen it in my life before. It was a good hand, large and bold and downright as herself.

The concierge stood in the doorway, one eye on the disappearing Matterhorn, one on the experts and others in animated conclave round the still-inaccessible telescope. I touched the concierge on the arm.

"Did you see Mrs. Lascelles this morning?"

The man's eyes opened before his lips.

"She has gone away, sir."

"I know," I said, having, indeed, divined no less. "What train did she catch?"

"The first one from here. That also catches the early train from Zermatt."

"I am sorry," I said, after a pause.
"I hoped to see Mrs. Lascelles before she went; now I must write. She left you an address, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"I shall ask you for it later on. No letters for me, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"Sure?"

"I will look again."

And I looked with him, over his shoulder; but there was nothing; and the note for Bob Evers now inspired me with a tripartite blend of curiosity, envy

and apprehension. I would have had a last word from the same hand myself, had it been ever so scornful. This silent scorn was the hardest sort to bear. Also, I wanted much to know what her last word was to Bob—and dreaded more what it might be.

There remained the unexpected triumph of having got rid of my lady, after all. That is not to be belittled even now. It is a triumph to succeed in any undertaking, more especially when one has abandoned one's own last hope of such success. At least, I had done my part. I had come to hate it, but the thing was done, and it had been a fairly difficult thing to do. It was impossible not to plume oneself a little on the whole, but the feeling was superficial, with deeper and uneasier feelings underneath.

Still, I had practically redeemed my impulsive promise to Catherine Evers; her son and this woman once parted, it should be easy to keep them apart, and my knowledge of the woman forbade me to deny the fullest significance to her departure. She had gone away to stay away-from Bob. She had listened to me the less with her ears, because her reason and her heart had been compelled to heed. She saw the unsuitability, as clearly as we did. But it was I that had helped to make her see it: wherefore. I deserved well of Catherine Evers, if of no other person in the world.

Oddly enough, this last consideration afforded me least satisfaction. It seemed to bring home to me by contrast the poor figure I must assuredly cut in the eyes of the other two, the still poorer opinion they would have of me if ever they knew all. I did not care to pursue this train of thought. It was a subject upon which I was not prepared to examine myself; to change it, I thought of Bob's present peril, which I had almost forgotten as I lounged abstractedly in the empty hall. If anything

were to happen to him, in the vulgar sense! What an irony, what poetic punishment for us survivors! And yet, even as I rehearsed the ghastly climax in my mind, I told myself that the mother had rather see him even thus, than married to Mrs. Lascelles; it was the younger woman that would never forgive me—or herself.

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Disappointed faces met me on my return to the veranda. The little crowd there had dwindled to a group. I could have had the telescope now for as long as I liked; the upper part of the Matterhorn was finally and utterly effaced and swallowed up by dense white mist and cloud. My friend the mountaineer looked grave, but his disfigured face did not wear the balked expression of others to which he drew my attention.

"It is like the curtain coming down with the man's head still in the lion's mouth," said he.

"I devoutly hope," said I, "that you don't seriously think there's any analogy."

The climber looked at me steadily, and then smiled.

"Well, perhaps I don't think it quite so bad as all that. But it's no use pretending it isn't dangerous. May I ask if you know who the foolhardy fellow is?"

I said I did not know, but mentioned my suspicion, only begging my climbing friend not to let the name go any further. It was in too many mouths already, in quite another connection, I was going on to explain; but the mountaineer nodded, as much as to warn me that even he knew all about that. was Bob's fate, however, to provide the hotel with its sensation while he reremained, and he was not allowed to perform anonymously very long. departure overnight leaked out. I was asked if it was true. The flight of Mrs. Lascelles was the next discovery; desperate deductions were drawn at once. She had jilted the unlucky youth and sent him in utter recklessness on his intentionally suicidal ascent.

Nobody any longer expected to see him come down alive; so much I gathered from the fragments of conversation that reached my ears; and never was better occupation for a bad day than appeared to be afforded by the discussion of the suppositious tragedy in all its imaginary detail. As, however, the talk invariably abated at my approach, giving place to uncomplimentary glances in my direction, I could not but infer that public opinion had assigned me an unenviable part in the piece. Perhaps I deserved it, though not from their point of view.

The afternoon was a dreariness and a dread. There was no ray of sun without, no sort of warmth within. Matterhorn never reappeared. seemed the grimmer monster for this sinister invisibility. I gathered that there was real occasion for anxiety, if not alarm, and I nursed mine chiefly in my own room, until I heard the news when I went down for my letters. Bob Evers had walked in as if nothing had happened, and gone straight up to his room with a note the concierge handed him. Some one had asked him whether it was he that had been up the Matterhorn in the morning, and young Evers had vouchsafed the barest affirmative compatible with civility. The sunburned climber was my informant.

"I don't mind telling you it is a relief to me," he added, "and to everybody, though I shouldn't wonder if there was a little unconscious disappointment in the air, as well. I congratulate you, for I could see you were anxious, and I must find an opportunity of congratulating your young friend himself."

Meanwhile, no such opportunity was afforded me, though I quite expected and was fully prepared for another visit from Bob in my room. I waited for him there until dinner time, but he never came. I was beginning to wish

he would. It was like the wrapping of the Matterhorn in mist; it only widened the field of apprehension, and yet it was not for me to go to the boy. My unrest was further aggravated by a letter I had just received from the boy's mother in answer to my first to her. It was not a very dreadful letter; but I only trusted that no evil impulse had caused Catherine to write in anything like the same strain to Bob; for neither was it a very charitable letter, nor one a man could be glad to get from the woman he had set on an enduring pinnacle.

There was only this to be said for it, that years ago I had sought in vain for a really human weakness in Catherine Evers, and now, at last, I had found one. She was rather too human about Mrs. Lascelles. I looked for Bob both at and after dinner, but we were never within speaking distance, and I fancied he avoided even my eye. What had Mrs. Lascelles said? He looked redder and browner and rougher in the face, but I heard that he would hardly open his lips at table, that he was almost surly on the subject of his exploit. Everybody else appeared to me to be speaking of it, or of Bob himself; but I had him on my nerves, and may well have formed an exaggerated impression about it all.

Only, I do not forget some of the things I did overhear that day and night. They now had the effect of sending me in search of Bob, since Bob would not come near me. "I will have it out with him," I grimly decided, "and then get out of this myself by the first train going." I had had quite enough of the place that had enchanted me up to the last four-and-twenty hours. I began to see myself back in Elm Park Gardens. There, at least, if also there alone, I should get some credit for what I had done.

It was no use looking for Bob on the terrace now; yet I did look there, among

other obvious places, before I could bring myself to knock at his door. There was a light in his room, so I knew that he was there, and he cried out admittance in so sharp a tone that I fancied he also knew who knocked. I found him in his shirt sleeves, packing. He received me with a stare in exact keeping with his tone. What on earth had Mrs. Lascelles said?

"Going away?" I asked, as a mere preliminary, and shut the door behind me. Bob followed the action with raised eyebrows, then flung me the shortest possible affirmative, as he bent once more over the suit case on the bed.

But in a few seconds he looked up.
"Anything I can do for you, Cle-

phane?"

"That depends on where you are going."

Bob went on packing with a smile. I guessed where he was going.

"I thought there might be something pressing," he remarked, without look-

ing up again.

"There is," said I. "There is something you can do for me on the spot. You can try to believe that I have not meant to be such a cad as I may have seemed—to you," I had intended saying, but I stopped short of that advisedly, as I thought of Mrs. Lascelles also.

"Oh, that's all right," said Bob, in a would-be airy tone that carried its own contradiction. "All's fair, according to the proverb; I no more blame you than you would have blamed me. I hope, on the contrary, that I may congratulate you?"

And he stood up with a look which, coupled with his words, made it my turn to stare.

"Indeed, you may not," said I.

"Aren't you engaged to her?" he asked.

"Good God, no!" I cried. "What makes you think so?"

"Everything!" exclaimed Bob, after

a moment's pause of obvious bewilderment. "I—you see—I had a note from Mrs, Lascelles herself!"

"Yes?" said I, carefully careless, but I wanted more than ever to know that

missive's gist.

"Only a few lines," Bob went on, ruefully. "They were the first thing I heard or saw when I got down, and they almost made me wish I'd come down with a run! Well, it's no use talking about it, only I thought you'd know. It was the usual smack in the eye, I suppose, only nicely put, and all that, She didn't tell me where she was going, or why; she told me I had better ask you."

"But you wouldn't condescend."

Bob gave a rather friendly little

laugh.

"I said I'd see you damned first," he admitted. "But, of course, I thought you were the lucky man. I still half believe you are!"

"Well, I'm not."

"Do you mean to say that she's refused, you, too?"

"She hasn't had the chance."

Bob's eyes opened to an infantile width.

"But you told me you were in earnest!" said he.

"As much in earnest as you were, I believe, was what I said."

"That's the same thing," returned Bob sharply. "You may not think it is. I don't care what you think. But I'm very sorry you said you were in earnest, if you were not."

His tone convinced me that he was no longer commiserating himself; he was sorry on some new account, and the evident reality of his regret filled me, in turn, with all the qualms of a guilty

conscience.

"Why are you sorry?" I demanded.
"Oh, not on my own account," said
Bob. "I'm delighted, personally, of
course."

"Then, do you mean to say-you A

actually told her-I was as much in earnest as you were?"

Bob Evers smiled openly in my face; it was the only revenge he ever took; even it was tempered by the inextinguishable sweetness of expression and the childlike, wide-eyed candor which were Bob's even in the hour of his humiliation, and will be, one hopes, all his days.

"Not in so many words," he said, "but I am afraid I did tell her in effect. You see, I took you at your word. I thought it was quite true. I'm awfully sorry, Duncan. But it really serves you

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I made no answer. I was looking at the suit case on the bed. Bob seemed to have lost all interest in his packing. I turned to leave him without a word.

"I am awfully sorry!" he was the one to say again. I began to wonder when he would see all round the point, and how it would affect his feelings, to say nothing of his actions, when he did. Meanwhile, it was Bob who was holding out his hand.

"So am I," I said, taking it.

And, for once, I, also, was not thinking about myself.

CHAPTER XII.

Where had Bob been going, and where was he going now? If these were not the first questions that I asked myself on coming away from him, they were, at all events, among my last thoughts that night, and, as it happened, quite my first next morning. His voice had reached me through my bedroom window, on the head of a dream about himself. I got up and looked out; there was Bob Evers seeing the suit case into the tiny train which brings your baggage-and yourself, if you like-to the very door of the Riffel Alp Hotel. Bob did not ride, and I watched him out of sight down the winding path threaded by the shining He walked slowly, with head rails.

and shoulders bent, it might be with dogged resolve, it might be in mere depression; there was never a glimpse of his face, nor a backward glance, as he swung round the final corner, with his greatcoat over his arm.

In spice of my curiosity as to his destination, I made no attempt to discover it for myself, but on consideration I was guilty of certain inquiries concerning that of Mrs. Lascelles. They had not to be very exhaustive; she had made no secret of her original plans upon leaving the Riffel Alp, and they did not appear to have undergone much change. I left, myself, that same afternoon, and lay that night amid the smells of Brigues, after a little tour of its hotels, in one of which I found the name of Mrs. Lascelles in the register, while in every one I was prepared to light upon Bob Evers in the flesh. But that encounter did not occur.

In the early morning I was one of a shivering handful awaiting the diligence for the Furka Pass, and an ominous drizzle made me thankful that my telegram of the previous day had been too late to secure me an outside seat. It was quite damp enough within. Nor did the day improve as we drove, or the view attract me in the least. It was at its worst as a sight, and I at mine as a sightseer. I have as little recollection of my fellow passengers; but I still see the page in the hotel register at the Rhone Glacier, with the name I sought written boldly in its place, just twenty-four hours earlier.

The Furka Pass has its European reputation; it would gain nothing from my enthusiastic praises, had I any enthusiasm to draw upon, or the descriptive powers to do it justice. But what I best remember is the time it took us to climb those interminable zigzags, and to shake off the too tenacious sight of the hotel in the hollow where I had seen a signature and eaten my lunch. In the end we rattled into Andermatt; here

was a huge hotel all but empty, with a perfect tome of a visitors' book, and on it, sure enough, the fine, free autograph which I was beginning to know so well.

"Yes, sare," said the concierge, "the season ends suddenly with the bad vedder at the beginning of the veek. You know that lady? She has been here last night; she go away again today on to Göschenen and Zurich. Yes, sare, she will be in Zurich to-night."

I was in Zurich myself the night after. I knew the hotel to go to, knew it from Mrs. Lascelles herself, whose experience of Continental hotels was so pathetically extensive. This was the best in Switzerland, so she had assured me in one of our talks; but one night of it appeared to be enough, on this occasion, for again I missed her by a few

hours. I was annoyed.

The place at which I found myself the following night was called Triberg, in the Black Forest, which I had never penetrated before, and certainly never shall again. It seemed to me an uttermost end of the earth. It was raining when I arrived, and the rain never ceased for an instant while I was there. But it was from Mrs. Lascelles that I had heard of the dismal spot as her ultimate objective after Switzerland. It was the only address with which she had provided the concierge at the Riffel Alp. All day I had regretted the night wasted at Zurich, on the chance of saving a day; but I had been sanguine of bringing my dubious quest to a successful issue here in Triberg. When we drove up to as gloomy a hostelry as I have ever beheld, with the blue-black forest smoking wet behind it, I found that here also the foul weather had brought the season to a premature and sudden end, literally emptying this particular hotel.

"Been and gone," said the landlord, grinning sardonically. "Too lonely for the lady. She has arrived last night and gone away again this morning. You

will find her at the Darmstaedterhof, in Baden-Baden, unless she changes her mind on the way."

I caught his grin. It had been the same story, at every stage of my journey; the chances were that it would be the same thing again at Baden-Baden.

A stern chase is proverbially protracted, but on dry land it has usually one end. Mine ended in Baden on the fifth and first fine day, rather early in the afternoon. On arrival, I drove straight to the Darmstaedterhof, and asked whether a Mrs. Lascelles was She was. It staying there or not. seemed incredible. Were they sure she They were sure. had not just left? But she was not in; at my request, they made equally sure of that. She had probably gone to the Conversationshaus, to listen to the band. All Baden went there in the afternoon, to listen to that There and then I paid off the cab and found my own way to this Conversationshaus, where I found a broad terrace, a fine long facade, a band stand. and people listening and walking up and down, people listening and drinking beer or coffee at more little tables, people listening and reading on rows of chairs, people standing to listen with all their ears; but not for a long time the person I sought.

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Not for a very long time; and yet, at last, and all alone, among the readers on the chairs, deep in a Tauchnitz volume, even here at Baden as in the Alps, more daintily, yet not less simply dressed, in pink muslin and a big black hat; and blessed here, as there, with such blooming health, such inimitable freshness, such an air of general well-being and of deep content, as almost to disgust me after my whole week's search and

my own hourly qualms.

So I found Mrs. Lascelles in the end, and so I saw her until she looked up and saw me; then the picture changed; but I am not going to describe the change.

"Captain Clephane!"

"It has taken me all the week to find you," said I, as I replaced my hat.

Her eyes flashed again.

"Well! And, now you have found me, aren't you satisfied? Pray, have a good look, Captain Clephane; and you won't find anybody else!"

Her meaning dawned on me at last. "I didn't expect to, Mrs. Lascelles."

"Am I to believe that?"

"You must do as you please. It is the truth. Mrs. Lascelles, I have been all the week looking for you, and you alone."

I spoke with some warmth, for, not only did I speak the truth, but it had become more and more the truth at every stage of my journey since Brigues. Mrs. Lascelles leaned back in her chair, and surveyed me, with less anger, but with the purer and more pernicious scorn.

"And what business had you to do that?" she asked calmly. "How dare

you. I should like to know?"

"I dared," said I, "because I owed you a debt, which, I felt, must be paid in person, or it would never be paid at all. Mrs. Lascelles, I owed, and owe you yet, about the most abject apology man ever made! I have followed you all this way for no other earthly reason than to make it, in all sincere humility. But it has taken me, more or less, since Tuesday morning, and I can't kneel here. Do you mind if I sit down?"

Mrs. Lascelles drew in the hem of her pink muslin, with an all-but-insufferable gesture of unwilling resignation. I took the next chair but one, but, leaning my elbow on the chair back between us, was rather the gainer by the intervening inches, which enabled me to study a perfect profile and the most wonderful coloring, as I could scarcely have done at still closer range. She never turned to look at me, but simply listened while the band played, and people passed, and I said my say. It was

very short; there was so little that she did not know. There was the excitement about Bob, his subsequent reappearance, our scene in his room, and my last sight of him in the morning; but the bare facts went into few words, and there was no demand for detail. Mrs. Lascelles seemed to have lost all interest in her latest lover; but, when I tried to speak of my own hateful hand in the affair, to explain what I could of it, but to extenuate nothing, and to apologize, from my heart, for it all, then there was a change in her; then her blood mounted. her bosom heaved, and I was silenced by a single flash from her eyes.

"Yes," said she, "you could let him think you were in earnest, you could pose as his rival, you could pretend all that! Not to me, I grant you! Even you did not go quite so far as that: or was it that you knew that I should see through you? You made up for it, however, the other night. That I never, never, never shall forgive. I, who had never seriously thought of accepting him, who was only hesitating in order to refuse him in the most deliberate and final manner imaginable-I, to have the word put into my mouth-by you! I. who was going, in any case, of my own accord, to be told to go-by you! One thing you will never know, Captain Clephane, and that is how nearly you drove me into marrying him just to spite you and his miserable mother. I meant to do it, that night when I left you. It would have served you right if I had!"

She did not rise. She did not look at me again. But I saw the tears standing in her eyes—one I saw roll down her cheek—and the sight smote me harder than her hardest word, though more words followed, in broken whispers:

"It wasn't because I cared—that you hurt me as you did. I never did care for him—like that. It was—because—you seemed to think my society contamination—to an honest boy. I did care for him, but not like that. I cared too

much for him to let him marry meto contaminate him for life!"

I repudiated the reiterated word, with all my might. I had never used it, even in my thoughts; it had never once occurred to me. Had I not shown as much? Had I behaved as if I feared contamination for myself? I rapped out these questions, with undue triumph, in my heat, only to see their second edge as it cut me to the quick.

"But you were playing a part," retorted Mrs. Lascelles. "You don't deny it. Are you proud of it that you rub it in? Or are you going to begin deny-

ing it now?"

That was impossible. It was too late now for denials. But, driven into my last corner, as it seemed, I relapsed for the moment into thought, and my thoughts took the form of a rapid retrospect of all the hours that this angry woman and I had spent together. They had been happy hours, so many of them unburdened by a single thought of Bob Evers and his folly, not one of them haunted by the usual sense of a part that is played. I almost wondered, as I realized this. I supposed it would be no use attempting to express myself to Mrs. Lascelles, but I felt I must say something before I went, so I said:

"I deny nothing, and I'm proud of nothing, but neither am I quite so ashamed, as, perhaps, I ought to be. Shall I tell you why, Mrs. Lascelles? It may have been an insolent and infamous part, as you imply; but I enjoyed playing it, and I used often to forget it was a part at all. So much so that even now I'm not so sure it was one! There—I suppose that makes it ten times worse. I won't apologize again. Do you mind giving me that stick?"

I had rested the two of them against the chair between us. Mrs. Lascelles had taken possession of one, with which she was engaged in making small circles in the ground. She did not cease at my request. She smiled, instead. "I mind very much," said she. "Now we have finished fighting, perhaps you will listen to the 'Meistersinger'—for it is worth listening to on that band—and try to appreciate Baden while you are here. There are no more trains for another hour."

The wooded hills rose over the bandstand, against the bright blue sky. The shadow of the colonnade lay sharp and black beyond our feet, with people passing, and the band crashing, in the sunlight beyond. That was Baden. I should not have found it a difficult place to appreciate a week or so before.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was the middle of November when I was shown once more into that little room in Elm Park Gardens. There was a fire, the windows were shut, and the electric light was a distinct improvement when the maid turned it on; otherwise, all was exactly as I had left it in August, and so often pictured it since. There was "Hope," presiding over the shelf of poets, and here "Paolo and Francesca," reminiscent as ever of Melbury Road, upon a wet Sunday, years and years ago. The day's Times and the week's Spectator were not less prominent than the last new problem novel; all three lay precisely where their predecessors had always lain; and my own dead self stood in its own old place upon the piano which had been in St. Helena with Napoleon. It is vanity's deserts to come across these unnecessary memorials of a decently buried boyhood; there is always something foolish about them, and I longed to confiscate this one of me. It was only with difficulty that I restrained myself.

But there was a photograph on the chimneypiece that interested me keenly. It was evidently the very latest of Bob Evers, and I studied it with a painful curiosity. Was the boy really altered, or did I only imagine it, from my secret knowledge of his affairs? To me he

seemed graver, more sedate, less angelically trustful in expression, and yet something finer and manlier withal; to confirm the idea, one had only to compare this new one with the racket photograph now relegated to the background. The round-eyed look was gone. Had I here yet another memorial of yet another buried boyhood? If so, I felt I was the sexton, and I might be ashamed, and I was.

"Looking at Bob? Isn't it a dear one of him? You see, he is none the worse!"

And Catherine Evers stood smiling, as warmly, as gratefully, as she grasped my hand; but, with her warmth, there was a certain nervousness of manner that had the curious effect of putting me perversely at my ease. I found myself looking critically at Catherine—really critically—for, I suppose, the first time in my life.

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"He is playing football," she continued, full as ever of her boy. "I had a letter from him only this morning. He had his colors at Eton, you know, but he never dreamed of getting them at Cambridge, yet now he really thinks he has a chance! They tried him the other day, and he kicked a goal. Dear old Bob! If he does get them, he will be a blue and a half, he says. He writes so happily, Duncan! I have so much to be thankful for—to thank you for!"

Yes, Catherine was good to look at, there was no doubt of it, and this time she was not wearing any hat. coursing of the lad, she was animated, eager, enthusiastic, with light and life in every look of the intellectual face, in every glance of the large, intellectual eyes, and in every intonation of the keen, dry voice. A sweet woman; a young woman; a woman with a full heart of love, and sympathy, and tenderness-for Bob! Yet, when she thanked me at the end, either upon an impulse, or because she thought she must, her eyes fell, and again I de-

tected that slight embarrassment, which was none the less a revelation to me—in Catherine Evers, of all women in the world.

"We won't speak of that," I said, "if you don't mind. I am not proud of it."

Catherine scanned me more parrowly.

Catherine scanned me more narrowly.

I knew her better with that look.

"Then, tell me about yourself, and do sit down," she said, drawing a chair near the fire, but sitting on the other side of it herself. "I needn't ask you how you are. I never saw you looking so well. That comes of going right away and not hurrying back. I think you were so wise! But, Duncan, I am sorry to see those two sticks still! Have you seen your man since you came back?"

"I have."

"Well?"

"There's no more army for me."

Catherine seemed more than sorry and disappointed; she looked quite indignant with the eminent specialist that had pronounced this final opinion. Was I sure he was the very best man for that kind of thing? She would have a second opinion, if she were I. Very well, then, a third! If there was one man she pitied from the bottom of her heart, it was the man without a profession or an occupation of some kind. Catherine looked, however, as if her pity were almost akin to horror.

"I have a trifle, luckily," I said. "I must try something else."

Catherine stared into the fire, as if thinking of something else for me to try. She seemed full of apprehension on my account.

"Don't worry about me," I said. "I came here to talk about somebody else."

Catherine almost started.

"I've told you about Bob," she said, with a suspicious upward glance from the fire.

"I don't mean Bob," said I, "or anything you may think I did for him or you. I said just now I didn't want to speak of it, and no more I do. Yet, as a matter of fact, I do want to speak to you about the lady in that case."

Catherine's face betrayed the mixed emotions of relief and fresh alarm.

"You don't mean to say the creature— But it's impossible! I heard from Bob only this morning. He wrote so happily!"

I could not help smiling at the nature

and quality of the alarm.

"They have seen nothing more of each other, if that's what you fear," said I. "But what I do want to speak about is this creature, as you call her, and no one else. She has done nothing to deserve quite so much contempt. I want you to be just with her, Catherine!"

I was serious. I may have been ridiculous. Catherine evidently found me so, for, after gauging me with that wry but humorous look which I knew so well of old, for which I had been waiting this afternoon, she went off into the decorous little fit of laughter in which it had invariably ended.

"Forgive me, Duncan, dear! But you do look so serious, and you are so dreadfully broad! I never was. I hope you remember that? Broad minds and easy principles! But, really, though, Duncan, is there anything to be said for her? Was she a possible person, in any sense of the word?"

"Quite a probable person," I assured

her.

"But I have heard all sorts of things about her!"

"From Bob?"

"No; he never mentioned her."

"Nor me, perhaps?"

"Nor you, Duncan, I am afraid. You see, he looked upon you as a successful rival. You wrote and told me so, if you remember, from some place on your way down from the mountains. Your letter and Bob arrived the same night."

I nodded.

"It was so clever of you!" pursued

Catherine. "Quite brilliant; but I don't know what to say to your letting my baby climb that awful Matterhorn; in a fog, too!" looked

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And there was real momentary re-

proach in the firelit face.

"I couldn't very well stop him, you know. Besides," I added, "it was such a chance."

"Of what?"

"Of getting rid of her! I thought you would think it worth the risk."

"I do," declared Catherine, on due consultation with the fire. "I really do! Bob is all I have—all I want—in this world, Duncan. But—yes—I'd rather he had never come home at all than come home married, at his age, to an Indian widow, whose first husband had divorced her! I mean it, Duncan; I do, indeed!"

"I am sure you do," said I. "It was just what I said to myself."

"To think of my Bob being number three!" murmured Catherine, with that plaintive drollery of hers which I had found irresistible in days of old.

I was able to resist it now.

"So, those were the things you heard?" I remarked.

"Yes," said Catherine; "haven't you heard them?"

"I didn't need. I knew her in India, years ago."

Catherine's eyes opened.

"You knew this Mrs. Lascelles?"

"Before that was her name. I have also met her husband. If you had known him, you would be less hard on her!"

Catherine's eyes were still wide open. They were rather hard eyes, after all.

"Why did you not tell me you had known her when you wrote," she

"It wouldn't have done any good. I did what you wanted done, you know. I thought that was enough."

"It was enough," echoed Catherine, with a quick return of grace. She

looked into the fire. "I don't want to be hard upon the poor thing, Duncan! I know you think we women always are, upon each other. But to have come back married—at his age—even to the nicest woman in the world! It would have been madness—ruination. Duncan, I'm going to say something else that may shock you!"

"Say away," said I.

Her voice had fallen. She was looking at me very narrowly, as if to measure the effect of her as yet unspoken words.

"I am not so very sure about marriage," she went on, "at any age! Don't misunderstand me—I was very happy—but I, for one, could never marry again—and I am not sure that I ever want to see Bob——"

Catherine had spoken very gently, looking all the time at the fire; when she ceased, there was a space of utter silence in the little room. Then her eyes came back furtively to mine; and.

presently, they were twinkling with their old, staid merriment.

"But to be number three!" she said, again. "My poor old Bob!"

And she smiled upon me tenderly, from the depths of her alter-egoism.

"Well," I said, "he never will be."
"God forbid!" cried Catherine.

"He has forbidden. It will never happen."

"Is she dead?" asked Catherine, rather quickly, though not too quickly.

"Not that I know of."

But it was hard to repress a sneer.
"Then, what makes you so sure—that he never could?"

"Well, he never will in my time!"
"You are good to me," said Catherine,
gratefully.

"Not a bit good," said I, "or—only to myself! I have been good to no one else in this whole matter. That's what it all amounts to, and that's what I really came to tell you. Catherine—I am married to her myself!"



COLOR OF PIERRETTE

IN Aprils that will know you Gone quietly like snow I shall not think to miss you When green winds blow.

I shall not look at apples
Turned sweet with sudden bloom
And catch my heart remembering
Your low, pink room.

But ever one goes wearing
A blue dress down the years,
My eyes will follow softly
Through tears, through tears!
KATHRYN WORTH,

. The Parasite

By Beatrice Ravenel

Author of "The Archipelago of Chance,"
"The Land of To-morrow," etc.





So that's why I can't marry you,"
Clara concluded. She put her hands to her smooth cap of waved chestnut hair, with the feeling that something had ruffled it, before she realized that the disturbance had taken place only inside the head. Her pulse was beating with the vehemence of her argument, and her discomposure was not lessened by the fact that the good-looking young man in the opposite chair was regarding her with a most disagreeable smile.

That is, you might have classified it as a smile, but it included contempt, hurt feelings and irony in about equal

proportions.

"I understand exactly," he observed in a voice to match. "Personally you have nothing against me. Your refusal is based entirely upon the worldly goods with which I cannot thee endow."

"That's a horrid way of putting it,"

flamed Clara.

"The truth, as has been frequently noted, can be horrid—very. Don't imagine that I can't appreciate your attitude, Clairette. You've lived so long with rich people that their habits and customs have struck in. You've spread your personality, so to speak, so as to absorb all the adjuncts. You're really less yourself than you are yourself-plusbackground."

He glanced about the impressive, pic-

ture-hung room as though it gave the key—as, indeed, it did—to the sort of life he meant. That room was like the bone of the fossil monster from which the whole creature might be reconstructed. The perfectly-appointed house around it where Clara lived with her aunt, Mrs. Paulwin, was only the beginning of it. "I don't criticize a fish for demanding a watery habitat, or a bird for stipulating for the air, but, after all, you weren't born to this sort of thing." He paused and Clara found the smile so unbearable that she jerked out the accusation herself.

"You mean that I'm a parasite, a hanger-on? That's sweet of you. Well, what if I am, if I don't object?"

"The trouble is that you do," said Alton mildly. "You don't enjoy it when your aunt treats you with a lack of consideration she wouldn't show her maid or her dog. She finds you immensely useful, not only in the social secretary, fetch-and-carry way, but as a real asset. You're an attraction; you bring people to the house; you create an atmosphere of youth that keeps old people going strong, as nothing else can do. And, best of all, there's no danger of your throwing up your position. No matter what she does to you, you'll stick."

Clara's face flushed.

"You're most insulting, Alton, and you're not accurate either. Aunt Myra

is awfully good to me, seeing that she isn't even my own aunt, only my late uncle's wife. As for being inconsiderate, she's just given her consent to my going abroad with Fanny Wilmerding. She's one of my old school friends, married well, lots of money, but doesn't get on with her husband. And giving her consent means that Aunt Myra pays my expenses. You can't call her selfish after that. I'm to be away three months. I've never been, so I'm crazy about it. Fanny wants to start as soon as possible—in a couple of weeks."

Alton looked at her with a peculiarly fixed gaze. It was entirely too much like a final farewell to be agreeable.

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"Then I shan't see much more of you. Well, I shouldn't have anyway. When I come back from Brazil I'll probably find you the blushing bride of a doting, millionaire." Suddenly elderly swooped forward and took her hands "Clara, won't you give me a chance? Won't you wait a year for me? This is really a wonderful chance, this offer down at Porto do Mar-the sort of thing that doesn't come twice in a man's life. Let me tell you about it. Brazil has devoted its attention to the gold and diamond mines, so that the extraordinary mineral wealth of the country has never been half exploited. Mr. Gardiner's company has a concession at Porto do Mar and its hinterland that is taking out half a dozen kinds of mineral deposits, and it's coining money hand over fist. I'm to go down, not as a plain civil engineer, but as assistant manager, and"-he hesitated-"I have a hunch that I'd be manager before long with a huge salary and a stake in the company besides. It would lead to something big."

"Mr. Gardiner? His company?"
Clara asked. There was an absentminded expression in her eyes as
though this were the most salient fact
she had gathered from Alton's energetic

statement. Mr. Gardiner was Mrs. Paulwin's brother. This was really his house, although, as he was away the greater part of the time, either visiting the sites of his enormous business interests or else traveling for pleasure, most people supposed that it belonged to Mrs. Paulwin, and she seldom took the trouble to put them right. "He made you the offer?"

"Yes. I mentioned to him that I had received one from a firm in Venezuela—just plain engineering work, good of its kind, but nothing to this—and he suggested that I might do better with his company."

"That was kind of him," said Clara. She withdrew her hands from the dangerous clasp of his. It was very difficult indeed to think clearly when all one could be aware of was that warm, disconcerting, persuasive contact. Her eyes rose suddenly to his. "Alton, could you come back at the end of the year—well, successful?"

"Rich, you mean? Yes, it's perfectly possible."

"Certain?"

She could see him struggling with temptation before he replied gravely: "Nothing is certain, dearest, but—"

"That's just it." cried Clara bitterly. "Nothing is certain, but some things are infinitely safer than others. You don't understand what it is to be a girl, Alton, or you wouldn't despise me so. It isn't as though I didn't know what it meant to be poor. If your plans failed-and they sound wild enough to me-genteel poverty, the worst there is. I was brought up that way until my parents died and Aunt Myra took me. It taught me one thing. I'm going to have a safe place in the world; I'm going to be one of the ruling class, not the ruled and bossed and ordered-I know myself well around one. enough to know that I'd make not only myself miserable but you too, if we had to scrimp and keep up appearances.

It's ghastly, deadly—I know. If I'm really a parasite, it's because the life suits me." She gave it to him relentlessly. "I have to marry the kind of life I want, not only the man. Some day I'll have parasites like me hanging on my favor; I shan't be one any longer. I shall be one of the bosses."

He was a little paler but his voice was quite natural.

"You'd be glad enough to marry, in a normal, self-respecting way, a man you loved and who loved you. You haven't lost all your natural tastes"

haven't lost all your natural tastes."

"Well, then," she said with a reckless laugh, "the thing for you to do is to come home with a fortune and ask me again—if I'm still in the market. It isn't money I want. It's freedom—don't you see that?—freedom to do what I like, to have the leisure to enjoy the big things because I don't have to worry about the little ones, like food and clothes. It isn't that I'm mercenary; it's only that I'm civilized."

"What do you mean by the big things? Why, you're giving up the biggest thing of all. Do you mean to say that, if you were in love with a poor man, you'd give him up and marry a rich one?"

A touch of wistfulness crept into her face. When he asked for the truth like that, she never failed to give it to him.

"I don't know. And that being the case, there's one thing I am very much determined not to do."

"What?"

"Fall in love with the poor man."

Alton swung on her.

"I believe," he said in a tone that was half passion, half angry accusation, "that you're half in love with me now." Then he checked himself sharply and rose to his feet as the door opened. Mrs. Paulwin came into the room.

She greeted him cheerfully, but she was too full of herself and the subject which had brought her there, to consider him one way or the other. It was characteristic of Mrs. Paulwin to treat the people whom she had no special desire to please or conciliate as pieces of furniture—very nice pieces sometimes, but negligible. She was not an ill-natured woman, but she had the rooted habit of considering her own comfort the most vital fact in the universe. It was not determination on her part; it was pure instinct, and therefore practically incurable. The one exception she made to this habit was the well-being of her brother, and even in this there was an instinctive egotism.

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She was not a rich woman, merely comfortably off, but, as the chatelaine of his house and the dispenser of his hospitality, she could give herself all the air of a grande dame. It would not be going too far to hint that she also was a parasite of a superior order. She was very careful never to irritate or contradict her brother, and, as she proceeded to demonstrate as soon as the first few formal sentences were over. she made his wish the predominant force to which all other interests had to vield. In her hands it became a ukase, a sort of battering-ram, opposition to which was not only futile but unthinkable.

The polite hope which Alton expressed, really because he could think of nothing else to say, that Mr. Gardiner was well, gave Mrs. Paulwin her opportunity.

"No, I am afraid not," she said with the weightiness that attended most of her utterances. "He is tired, Mr. Moore; tired with the responsibilities of his business. No wonder! What he needs is a long rest, and he has expressed a wish to open the place in the North Carolina mountains at once, instead of waiting until later in the season. A beautiful place, though rather out of the way—though in this age of automobiles that hardly matters, does it, as long as the roads are good? And

ours are." She turned to Clara. am sorry, my dear, that you will have to be disappointed in your plans. You can go abroad in the fall with me instead. We shall leave for North Carolina just as soon as I can get ready." Her gentle finality defied opposition.

Clara's mouth opened and shut twice

before her reply came out.

"But-but, Aunt Myra," she said, battling for self-control, "you said I could go with Fanny. She's counting on me." Her tone made Alton very angry, all at once. It told more of her life than she had allowed him to sus-The natural Clara would have burst out into recriminations, or, perhaps, into laughter at the absurdity of her losing the trip on which she had set her heart. This Clara was indignant but subservient, counting the cost of mutiny and afraid to take the risk. "But you could get on without me, couldn't you, Aunt Myra?" she pleaded, her voice dangerously near a whine.

"Don't be nonsensical, Clara. When should I need you more than being up there on the top of a mountain without another civilized woman to talk to within miles? Wallace says he doesn't want a house party-doesn't feel up to it. Of course you'll come with me." The question was settled, not to be reopened. "Besides," she added virtuously, "I hear that Fanny Wilmerding is going to Paris to arrange about a divorce, and I hardly care to have you mixed up in any such affair."

"I know she is," murmured Clara. "She's had the most awful time with She's perfectly broken-up and miserable about it. She says it would be the greatest comfort in the world to have me. We've always been such

friends."

"That settles it!" Mrs. Paulwin clinched the matter. "No place whatsoever for a nice girl."

Clara's glance crossed swords with Alton's. His said: "Didn't I say she

treated you like a dog?" Hers responded: "Wait until I get my turn!" And there was something enigmatic in her look that he did not altogether fathom. It rather increased his lack of

happiness.

He would have been more comprehending, though even less happy, if he could have seen Clara when she was left alone in the room. She picked up the letters which she was to answer for her aunt and laid them methodically on the writing table. Then she left them there and walked to the other end of the room where the full-length portrait of Gardiner, the work of one of the most famous of painters, dominated the place. It showed him at his best, distinguished, powerful, with a hint of humor about the well-cut mouth and more than a hint of appreciation of the good things of earth looking out of his masterful, sherry-brown eyes. An attractive man, no longer young but without the disabilities of age. A generous man, opinionated but tolerant, and most eminently presentable in public. After all, one spent a large part of life in public or preparing to be there.

A sardonic flicker passed over Clara's mouth. Perhaps Aunt Myra would have been wiser to have allowed her to accompany Fanny to Paris. It was hardly to his sister's interests to have Gardiner marry. He would, no doubt, provide for her handsomely but hardly in her present style of living. And the style is the person-in a sense which the Frenchman who originated the phrase did not include-among these people. It had recently been brought home to Clara that Gardiner was thinking of marrying. She knew the signs; she could not mistake their import. She wondered whether Aunt Myra's insistence on her going with them to the South had been instigated by his wishes. If so, Aunt Myra didn't know it.

Her eyes went back to the portrait. There was an admirable reserve about

It made her feel that she did not know him very well, but this reserve, which was habitual with him, would make things easier. When she got to that point Clara pulled herself up in horror. Was that the way to feel about-about one's husband? That the less one knew him, the less he loomed on the horizon, the better? What sort of a wife would she make? Then she rallied. Her rather hard common sense came to her aid. She knew that, once married, she would make a very good wife, an efficient, conscientious wife. She had made a good and pleasant companion to Aunt Myra, who was often trying. She could perfectly satisfy Mr. Gardiner. He wasn't looking for romance, though the glint in his self-possessed eyes was a little disturbing. Her entire circle would consider her a very complete idiot if she allowed such a chance to slip. She might, some day, agree with them.

There was the future, the mysterious, insecure time to come, She could imagine herself living in some small, poky way, eking out her tiny income by the shifts which untrained gentlewomen learned to use. Governessing, shopping, embroidery. No, that was unbearable. Before that time came she must be safely married with a decorous niche in the prosperous world. then, out of the humiliation of her mind, came reënforcement in the shape of a motive that she would have been ashamed of, had she not just been reminded of her dependent position. If she married Mr. Gardiner, she would have the chance to patronize Aunt Myra. As the young wife of a devoted, elder man-she could make him devoted if she wanted him that way-she would be the possessor of a secret power the very thought of which was balm. "It's a universal impulse, I suppose, to want to pay back," she mused. "I needn't be ashamed of it."

But she could not conceal from her-

self that she was ashamed of something. She went back to the letters and worked doggedly at them, shutting her mind to any other kind of thoughts.

It was the next afternoon that Clara found herself in the presence of both the men who mainly troubled those thoughts. Fanny Wilmerding might intend to split her married life into halves, but she was keeping up appearances until the very last moment, and her rooms were full of a creditable crowd of guests. Gardiner was talking to his hostess, decidedly more interested in her because of the rumors, when she drew his attention to Clara who was chatting to a gray-haired, impressive man. Fanny was always willing to do her friends a good turn.

"Wonderful how she gets on with older men—ambassadors and senators and things, isn't it?" Fanny asked. "When she's a bit more worldly she'll be the ideal hostess. I've always said that, if I were a rich old bachelor, I'd pick out a girl like that, who'd make a good appearance and be grateful for the promotion. Not one of those spoiled flappers that wear a man out. Clara'd even stay at home when the old man wanted to be nursed and amused, and look after him. She's a dear."

Gardiner turned a thoughtful look on the object of these encomiums. At the same moment Alton, across the room, was saying to Clara:

"Well, after all, that liking for the wilds shows that Gardiner has natural impulses. He looks like such a finished, sophisticated product."

Clara opened her eyes.

"Wilds?" she ejaculated. "I wish you could see what they call a camp. It's a kind of rustic palace, the sort you fancy a shepherd king building, if he had all the modern improvements besides. It has its own artificial lake to supply the electric power and the baths, and it presupposes a multitude of ser-

vants. And you can't imagine the trouble it takes to keep the wild flowers wild."

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"That's a refinement of luxury, but it does show some imagination," Alton answered slowly.

It came home to her that he was honestly trying to appreciate all the good points of his employer. A lump came into her throat. That was so like Alton, so broad, so decent. "And I'm such a mean little devil," she told herself. "I suppose you get the sort of husband you deserve. I don't deserve him anyway."

It would be easier to do the sensible thing after Alton was safely out of the country and she did not have to make the disturbing choice, day after day, as to whether she should see him again. Then she could harden her heart to the sentimental lures and focus on common sense.

The trip to North Carolina would, she was sure, develop the crisis. She had no doubt, whatever Aunt Myra's myopia might be, of the significance of Gardiner's increasing notice, the subtle changes in his manner when he found himself alone with her. She had to admit that he behaved very well, which meant primarily that he did not overdo it. His behavior might have served as a model for a manual of instruction of "How a Gentleman of Ripe Years Should Court a Timid Gazelle." was creating an atmosphere which might comfortably, and without undue stress, finally engulf her. She was becoming used to him. After a while she would find that her outposts had fallen; and besides, there was that traitor inside the fortress, that haunting premonition of the poor, poky little old maid of the distant future, picking the bones of life, and wondering why she had been so hopeless a little imbecile as to muff such a desirable chance.

The journey to North Carolina gave ample scope for the display of Gardi-

ner's social gifts and tact, because it turned out to be a trying occasion. In the first place, Francine, Aunt Myra's maid, developed an indisposition which made it necessary to leave her behind, and which proved later to be a case of appendicitis. The rest of the servants were sent ahead by train the day before the family started. At Asheville, Miller, the chauffeur, met Gardiner, Aunt Myra, and Clara, with the finest of the cars, and hinted that he thought it might be just as well to wait until next morning, in view of the weather, before proceeding for the eighty or so miles to Woodcrest.

Gardiner, who had been charming, now exhibited that calm obstinacy that failed to recognize obstacles. In the first place, the distance was not nearly When Miller presumed to so much. hint darkly at his experience of storms, and his distrust of the steady rain that was falling, he was immediately put in his place. What Gardiner had made up his mind to possessed the force of a natural law, and he had made up his mind to sleep in his own house on his There was nothing own mountain. else, his mind being made up, to be done.

The young chauffeur's jaw set in an obstinate line of his own, but he said no more. The rain increased, accompanying them faithfully all the way. Clara could feel the road becoming more and more difficult to negotiate, as they went on. The grades had always terrified her. Miller's face became more and more statuesque until there was something dreadful about it. She felt that they were grazing death over and over, and that he knew it. The curves had never been so sharp, so numerous, nor so erratic. What was worse, the ground seemed to give way under the tires, melt, threaten to slip with the weight of the car over perilous edges. After a while she understood that there was at least no possibility of going back, even if Gardiner's will had permitted it; that would be more dangerous still. The rain had become a relentless torrent. She felt as though she could see the road behind them being wiped out, foot by foot, as they climbed, the solid ground being transformed into mud, into mist, into nothing. There was nowhere to stop. They passed only deserted camps, sure to be empty at this season. They must reach the top and their own house. They must have been driving for hours and hours.

"The man who said you ought to live dangerously would have the time of his life now," Clara told herself grimly. There was one fine point about Aunt Myra anyway. She huddled in her corner overcome with uneasiness, but at least speechless.

At last they were nearing the top. Round the last curve Clara began to stretch herself delicately. In just a few minutes more they would see the light flashing out between the thick evergreen foliage. The door would be open; there would be servants to take their damp outer garments and bring them delicious hot drinks. And then would come baths. And after that a real mountain supper, which, like the indigenous flowers, was a fad of Gardiner's. Everything autochthonous.

Trout and fried chicken and fried hominy! Rapture! The long ride had left her starving, in spite of the lunch they had eaten as they lurched along, not daring to stop. Such a soggy, distasteful lunch. In her imagination she was already curled up, warm and replete, by the fire.

"Hey, how's this?" exclaimed Gardiner. "What the dickens-"

Dark and lugubrious, the big, widespread house loomed before them. No lights, no fires, no servants, certainly no promise of supper. As the car came to a stop under the roof of the porch, Gardiner thrust the upper part of his body out of the door, continuing to inquire of the universe what the matter was. The only thing that answered him was the voice of the caretaker. The sound of the car had brought him out of his cottage, and he hastened to open the door into the dark and gloomy mansion. It was like an arrival in a Gothic romance.

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"The servants couldn't have got here," quavered Mrs. Paulwin.

Her brother turned on her with exasperation.

"Any fool can see that," he thundered. "But why haven't they? What's

From the caretaker the information was elicited that something was probably not so much up as down. He had heard of a washout and a railway bridge that had given way. Trains had been irregular. He was evidently astonished at their hardihood in venturing up the mountain. The chauffeur observed in a tone so guarded that it might be ignored, that it was the worst trip he ever hoped to make. Gardiner ignored it.

"Well," he said with a heavy attempt to make the best of things, "they'll get here in the morning, no doubt. Though why that fool 'Minton didn't hire some cars and do as we did, I can't imagine." Minton was the butler. "Thank God," he added fervently, as he tested a switch, "the power's on anyway."

Everybody cheered up. Here was immediate light and warmth. Clara found herself automatically in the position of housekeeper. It had been one of her unclassified duties to act as a buffer between Aunt Myra and the household staff, so that she had a working hypothesis of how things ought to be done, and a knowledge of where stores were kept. When she began to investigate she discovered that the boxes and crates sent from New York had probably shared the fate of the servants and were patiently waiting somewhere along the road, and that the

storeroom would have to be handled with circumspection.

As she hastily collected the materials for a ready-to-eat meal and filled the kettle at the sink tap, Clara received another proof of the poet's opinion that beauty moves the masculine temperament more than gold. Respectful but firm hands removed the kettle from her grasp.

"This ain't my work, Miss Paulwin," said the lordly Miller, "but I'd rather do it myself than see you do it."

"Nonsense, Miller," she responded briskly. "It's a case of everybody having to help, just as though we were marooned on a desert island." Then she regretted the remark, as she recalled the leveling of social distinctions that certain widespread stories of marooned people had presented. However, Miller kept the prescribed distance, and with her advice concocted a meal of sorts which they carried to their elders and betters, whom they found enjoying the immense hall fire that Blandy, the caretaker, had coaxed into being.

When Blandy had followed his nose to the coffee pot simmering on the kitchen electric stove, Clara got a sample of the proud spirit of the North Carolina mountaineer, the purest Nordic stock left in this country.

"No, ma'am," he responded to her appeals. "Caretake I was hired for an' caretake I does an' aim to do, but women's jobs is never done by me, 'ceptin' in my own house when my ole woman's away, like she is now, visitin' with daughter in Brevard. Otherwheres, no ma'am'."

Wearily Clara went upstairs to put three bedrooms in order and hunt for linen and blankets. After the orderliness which her own fastidious taste forced her to undertake had been accomplished, she sat down on the edge of her bed and wept from sheer anger. It became plain to her that a large part of the human race was set aside to

make the smaller section comfortable. It would be pleasant to assert here that Clara's experience of service had the effect of converting her to a belief in the brotherhood of man, domestically considered. It must be admitted that her ordeal had the opposite result. She came out of it hardened in her resolution to remain in the spoiled section of society. No, she would be a blind, blundering idiot to give up the material goods of this world for the sake of a The glimpses of what life mirage. might be with Alton must be a mirage promise. They were too perfect to be real.

"No. I'm blessed if I drop into the lower classes," vowed Clara, "Aunt Myra would never dream of letting me do all this if I were a rich girl. As for him, I suppose he thinks Miller is doing it-if he takes the trouble to think. He's been raised a pet, and as long as things are done for him he doesn't worry over who does them. Oh, the insolence, the brutal selfishness of these plutocrats!" She gave a shaky "Nobody's going to be more arrogant than I am, I suppose, when I'm one of them. But I'm going to be arrogant to the others, not to dependents. Blandy's the one I'm going to be nicest to because he's got the nerve to rebel, the lazy old wretch, and I haven't."

Coming down betimes in the morning, Clara discovered Miller at work with a vacuum cleaner, manipulating it with the air of a grand duke under a temporary cloud. The torrent from the sky continued, and he saw no prospect of communication with the outside world. During their mutual preparation of breakfast his air of worry increased. Later in the morning she came into the hall to hear him receiving his orders from Gardiner and apparently disputing them.

"As for going down to the station, sir, of course I'll go, though you may

be sure the servants won't be there. But as for going down in the car, that's impossible. It's as much as a man's life would be worth, with the landslides and such, and besides," added Miller as though presenting a really weighty argument, "you might ruin the car."

"Very well," said Gardiner testily; "but you can at least get the mail. It's intolerable," he went on, addressing Clara with an absolute change of manner, "being cut off from the news, isn't it?"

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In Blandy's opinion they were cut off from everything.

"An' that's a brave man," was his verdict, as he watched Miller, clad in high boots and weatherproof coat, plunge into the shower bath of the avenue, beyond which a wall of water opened and hid him. It was going to be the worst storm in ten years-as bad as that time when all the lakes left their beds and traipsed off, and people were left clinging to trees with their houses washed away around them, and some drowned in the Asheville station itself. He hoped their dam wouldn't go. Did she have any candles? They could catch water from outside. had so far relented on the subject of women's jobs as to make himself useful. Clara came to the conclusion that he had stood on his dignity only because another masculine eye had been there to scorn him. Hers did not count.

What Noah must have suffered in the first liner, with different kinds of animals to appease, Clara suffered now. Aunt Myra went to bed with a headache, as she invariably did when domestic crises threatened—the sort of headache that could think up small comforts for itself. Gardiner was making a gallant effort to take the high ground that the episode was a lark and that Blandy was running things. He was as carefully dressed as ever and very agreeable, and yet she could not help feeling that he had aged a little since their ar-

rival. It was indefinable, and perhaps due to that most inelegant of small maladies, a bad cold in the head which he had contracted. He remained all day by the hall fire, and did his best to create the illusion that they were two romantic persons in a romantic situation, arranging their wonderful future over the sympathetic blaze. It was funny and rather awful.

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Because it was evident that this conversation circled about, verged on, practically indicated that mutual future. He led off by way of foreign travel. It was too bad she had been disappointed over the Paris trip. Never mind, some day she should go anywhere she wanted to. Clara listened in a daze, feeling that she was being pushed, not unwillingly, into his path. She was very tired and his plausible voice took all the fight out of her. After this, when he made his offer of all he was and had, she would have no right whatever to seem surprised. The timid gazelle was getting ready to eat out of his hand.

Gardiner leaned over and patted her

knee.

"You'd like to see the Taj Mahal, by moonlight—with me?" he asked.

Clara restrained a wild laugh. It was as though he were promising to don the costume of *Romeo* and serenade her. She had heard of his business methods, calm, cogent, settling a deal with half a dozen words. It was no use struggling against a determination as unthinking as a natural force. She nodded dumbly.

"Then—we'll go," said Gardiner. She turned her head sharply so that his kiss fell on the wave over her right ear. Then she fled.

It was settled. She had done the sensible, the only wise thing. She kept out of his way until the twilight was creeping into the rain-streaked windows. Then as she crept downstairs she paused on the upper landing and leaned over the balustrade. Under her

was the hall, and on one side of it the fireplace with the original of the distinguished portrait in front of it, waiting, with the impatience of a much

younger man, for her arrival.

But a far different man was there. Slouched in his armchair, his legs sprawling largely, his head, on which there was the kind of maroon-velvet cap which our ancestors used to wear when they took off their wigs, was Gardiner, fast asleep. A gentle and regular snoring pur puffed out his mouth. His body drooped foolishly. And all at once a chill began at the soles of Clara's feet and quivered to the nape of her neck.

"My husband!" said the chill.

At the same moment Gardiner started upright with a final snort. He stared, not at her, but at the door which led to the veranda.

It had burst open, bringing with it the furious noise of cataracts and a gust of cold air that swept the house. And that was not all. A figure staggered in, blown like a leaf, and caught at the nearest piece of furniture for

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"Miller!" Gardiner exclaimed. The figure in Miller's high boots steadied itself, attacked the door, wrestled with it and shut it, then turned to them. It was not Miller. Clara's hands made a swift, upheaving motion and then balled themselves, dropping at her sides. It was the one man in the world who

ought not to be there.

"Good evening," said Alton pleasantly, pushing the drenched hair back from his face. "I met Miller down at that little station at the foot of the mountain, Mr. Gardiner. I'm in this part of the world on a little business of my own before sailing. Miller had made up his mind not to come up again, so-I brought the mail." Fumbling in his breast he produced a package. "Probably the last for the present. Washouts. Everything's stopped."

It took Gardiner half a minute more to get used to the man he had not been

expecting.

"Thank you," he mumbled, "Come by the fire. Let me get you a drink. You'll need it." Casting the velvet cap on a chair he started for the dining room.

"Come into the kitchen." said a severe voice. Clara emerged from the shadows. "It's the most natural place for me to receive you in; I've lived there ever since we came," she added. "You're crazy to come up here. Mil-

"God bless Miller," said Alton solemnly. From the kitchen table where Clara had almost forcibly seated him. after making him strip off his coat and boots, he looked at her through the steam of coffee. "I came because I couldn't stay away. The business that brought me down is your business too, Clairette, I've come to make one last appeal-

"Oh, it isn't any use, it isn't any use!" cried Clara desperately. To her enormous relief Blandy appeared in the doorway, carrying a tumbler as carefully as though it had been a young baby. With the tumbler he delivered the polite message that 'Mr. Gardiner's room and wardrobe were at the disposal of the guest. Alton returned to the hall.

One thought alone dominated Clara's mind as she set Blandy to work opening more cans. Alton must not suspect that she was engaged to Gardiner, and Gardiner must not suspect that Alton was his rival. That would make life here intolerable. Probably no woman ever leaned harder than Clara did on the support of good manners through the next meal and those that followed it. It is not good manners to show particular fondness in public. The task of Noah became luxurious ease in comparison with hers, because none of the animals were in love with Noah,

Alton had brought depressing news. Escape was out of the question. Not the tempest of which Blandy cherished such gruesome souvenirs was worse than the one now raging. Whole sections of the mountainside were giving way. The beds of rivers were becoming confounded with the surrounding country. Villages were in grave danger, and the landscape was one huge desolation. Though it was impossible that he should do otherwise, Aunt Myra-who recovered at meal times-politely expressed the hope that Mr. Moore would remain with them for the next few days. He thanked her gravely and accepted the invitation.

Three abominable days passed. With storm without and within. Clara wondered how she could endure living on a tight rope. She had to be all things to all men-all the men there wereand yet not too much to either of them. Her pride was one raw wound. She had to evade, avoid, sidestep. something deeper than her pride sobbed to her-to the unrelenting determination that was the present Clara-for comfort and mercy. She set her teeth and tensed her muscles; she even thanked the dreary work because it brought her sleep when she sank into bed, exhausted.

She did so much that Alton lost his temper with her, and, as she informed him, behaved exactly as Miller had done. To her taunts he replied that he had learned to be a good plain cook on hunting trips, and would, no doubt, be glad of it in camp down in Brazil.

Clara looked up from the croquettes she was concocting. A peculiar gleam came into her somber eyes, the gleam of eyes that are certain that they can see through a stone wall if they try hard enough.

"Alton," she said curiously, "if I offered—I don't intend to, you know but if I said I'd go down to Porto do Mar with you, would you take me?" "No," said Alton shortly. His hand closed and a vein in his forehead began beating, but his voice was firm,

"Why not?"

"Because—" He got up and began pacing the floor. With his back to her he went on talking, "It's no place for a woman. Too rough. You wouldn't like it—couldn't stand it a week. Not another civilized woman in miles, and no comforts, and—" He swung around. "Would you—"

"No, I wouldn't," returned Clara promptly. "But it seems queer to me. You were perfectly willing to take me to Venezuela, you remember, before you

got this other offer."

"That's entirely different—near civilized, that place is. The offer's still open; they say, if I change my plans, just wire them. But as I told you, it won't lead so far. Clara—"

Clara put up her floury hands.

"Don't!" she said faintly. She told herself, as she held him off with implacable eyes, that the only people she despised were the shillyshalliers, who didn't know their own minds. She wasn't one of those. She had decided.

On the whole, it was Gardiner who was becoming the harder of the two to manage. There were reasons for his growing gloom and the uncertainty of his temper. The letters which Alton had brought had disturbed him. He complained that it was exceedingly important that he should communicate with his brokers, and no feasible way of doing so. That peculiar look of age became more noticeable, though it vanished when he caught Clara alone. It was in these moments that she thanked Heaven that Wallace—she was learning to call him that-had a serious cold, and a restraining belief in germs that a lover some generations back would not have had. He contented himself with moderate endearments, and Clara was forced to recognize his consideration for her. She assured herself that she was a
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On the fourth morning the downpour slackened. It did not stop, but became a normal rain, instead of a monstrous chaos of water. Wrapped up in a mackintosh and with his handsome legs incased in hip boots, Gardiner ventured into the badly leaking veranda, and then into what had been the terrace garden, to take stock of the damage. Alton, similarly attired, accompanied him, and Clara stood in the open doorway and watched them. The grounds had suf-The flower borders had fered badly. been literally carried away, and blobs of red clay had been washed from the hillside behind the house and deposited in amorphous patches over the grass. The drive was completely disorganized and would have to be treated. Around some of the trees the earth had been swept off, so that their roots humped nakedly out of the ground, and threatened disaster if another high wind came their way. In the plateau on which the house stood wide cracks had appeared, especially near the edge, to the left, where the slope was steep, curving down through young saplings and ledges of rock, until it reached the second loop of the drive.

As the two men moved further out, walking rather with the pace of elephants, one high-raised foot at a time, through the heavy mud, their voices failed to reach her. Catching up a waterproof coat, she too stepped into the veranda. The air struck cold against her silk-covered legs, but she

stood her ground.

Alton gestured toward the slope be-

"I think, Mr. Gardiner," he called, "that would be the easiest way down. Any one would bog round the drive, but the curve below seems to have been washed clean."

Something boiled up in Clara's soul. So Wallace was sending Alton down the mountain again. It was dangerous: he knew it was dangerous, but that counted not at all where his precious securities were concerned. She had seen Gardiner hand Alton a handful of letters, the evening before. He was going to risk Alton's life coolly, just like that. Miller, she was aware, had refused to make his return trip, though he knew he might be throwing away his excellent place by balking, and Miller was no coward. Money, always the insolence of money! Using Miller, using Alton, What did it matter to Gardiner which it was? Even she-he was going to add her to the number of his bond slaves, through the force of his money.

She heard Gardiner ask: "Will you come up again?"

"No. It's clearing, and in a day or two your people can come up. I intend to sail at once; that is, within a week. There's a ship, the Santa Rosa, that will take me down with only a couple of stops on the way—one at Caracas, I know. The sooner the better."

"Um-m, yes," Gardiner agreed. He turned back to the house, evidently expecting Alton to follow him, this being only the reconnoitering expedition. Instead, Alton strode nearer the broken edge of the terrace, and after a moment stepped across the crack in the ground and leaned over.

"Just as I supposed," he shouted.
"The road's all right down there. I could----"

Clara cried out. As though his weight had lent it the needed impetus, the brim of the terrace had suddenly given way, melted, curled outwards. One second she saw a desperate figure, aware of its peril, floundering wildly to keep its balance, to get again to safety across the break that had widened horribly behind him. The next instant there was nothing—nothing but the violent noise of sliding earth, rush-

ing down the incline into the void in which Alton and the bushes had been engulfed!

Gardiner's arms held her back. She was in the midst of the horrible, trammeling slush, though she had no recollection of rushing forward. She struggled blindly for a moment, then succumbed, recognizing the uselessness of her protest. Gardiner's face was strained, but the muscles that controlled her were like iron, and in his eves was an expression that she thought of later as stirred-not horrified nor sick, but simply excited. She asked in a voice that was a croak:

"Is he dead?"

He did not answer. When she forced her way nearer the broken rim of gashed earth he came with her, and when she took hold of a substantial young tree and craned forward, he put his arm about both the tree and herself. What was she going to see down there? Anything but ghastly masses of red clay and stone and broken branches?

A shout from below struck her on the face like a blow. Tears rushed into her eyes. They added to the unreality of what she saw.

On the second, curve of the drive stood Alton. He was certainly alive and apparently unhurt. He was clogged with mud so that he looked like an incredibly dirty snow man, twice his usual breadth. They saw him strip off his mackintosh and stand in the thick sweater that he wore under it. a fallen branch of cedar he scoured off the worst accumulations from his boots. Then he curved his hands about his mouth as though to shout again, and looked up at them.

It was curious, how the shout did not come. For a while he remained like a statue of a trumpeter, struck into silence. He gazed at the group on the height above him, Clara in Gardiner's arm, and it seemed to tell him all he

needed to know.

"Are you all right?" Gardiner called The trumpeter came to life. He voice rang out defiantly:

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"Absolutely. Fell into the branches they handed me on, neat as could be Swung down here. I---"

"How will you get up again?" "Shan't try. I'll go right down, 1

accept the arbitrament of fate." "Good-by then!" Gardiner pealed back,

"Good-by. Thank you for your hospitality. Good-by, Clara." Alton swung around and went trudging around the curve. He was gone.

Clara wrenched herself from the protecting arm. Without a word she started for the house. Her whole mture was in rebellion against fate's inpertinent interposition. It was so mfinished, so maddeningly unsatisfactory, to have him disappear like that, cut of from her as completely as the piece of sunken ground was from its mother earth. Now that Alton was not there, she felt cheated, deprived of the last precious hours she might have had with him. They would have led to nothing Oh, wouldn't they? Doesn't everybody know that the most precious hours in a woman's life may be those that lead to nothing tangible, but are stored up for the future, to become the treasuries of dreams? Lots of women are kept happy, or at least resigned, by the undying memories of these seed-bearing hours.

Gardiner's arms hovered around her shoulders again as they reached the hall

"My dear, dear little girl, go and change at once," he urged solicitously. With her curious expression of star-

ing through stone walls, she glanced up into his face.

"Don't touch me," said Clara.

"My dear-"

"Don't touch me!"

The door into the dining room was nearer than the staircase. She did not stop until she had shut herself into the

She was shivering, and she kitchen. lit the electric stove and became conscious, at the sight of her hands, of what the rest of her must be like. With a shudder of disgust, she peeled off her muddy coat. The brevity of her skirt had saved it from incrustations, but her stockings and shoes were vile. Barefooted, she slipped up the service stairs to her room and dressed herself again from hair net to slippers, with a lavish use of warm water. She felt unclean. She didn't want to think, and yet the idea of not being alone was abhorrent to her.

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She promptly received the proof-as though she needed any such reminderthat parasites cannot be choosers, even of solitude. Aunt Myra's fretful tones summoned her from the adjacent room. It was just as well, Clara assured herself grimly. The less of the luxury of grief she was allowed to indulge in the better. When she presented herself at the day-bedside where Aunt Myra lay among a multitude of rugs and pillows, with a neat little electric warming appliance at her elbow, Clara was not quite the same amenable attendant as usual. She was more like a flint from which the impatient spark can be struck without much trouble.

"Clara, do you know where that tiny hot-water bag I use for my face was put? And, oh, yes, will you find out whether Mr. Moore has finished with that last travel magazine? There's an article on Brazil he was interested in. Gone, did you say? How very sudden."

"Very," Clara agreed with irony. "He might at least have said good-by to you." The spark flashed. She stood tensed, her face twisted with suspicion and passion, her feet pressing themselves into the rug. "Aunt Myra, do you know anything about a place called Porto do Mar—a place where Wal—Mr. Gardiner owns concessions?"

A remarkable change came over Mrs.

Paulwin's languid presence. She lifted herself on her elbow, and an expression of intense dislike and disapproval settled on her large, pink countenance.

"That place?" she queried. "That awful place? I've told Wallace that I didn't see how he could countenance it. Yes, indeed, I should think I do. I can tell you all about that place!"

Alton Moore stood on the deck of the Santa Rosa, watching the shore line grow cloudy and mystical, looked now like what it was-a deceit, the sort of thing that caved with you, physically and morally. Since he had accepted the arbitrament of destiny, his face had lost something of its fine fighting character. In spite of the pressure of business incident to his departure, he had been conscious for days of an undercurrent of thought that was almost like a dialogue, the sort of mephistophelian argument a man holds with himself when he has just discovered his best friend playing him false. He had treated the world as a friend, and see what it had done to him! The thing to do was to accept the axionr that most people seemed to accept: namely that the world was rotten at heart, but that the sensible man laughed it off, and made the best of the specious but palatable surface.

The Santa Rosa was a freight ship, and there were only a few passengers, most of whom had retired to their cabins as the twilight drew in. Absorbed in his entirely novel line of thought, Alton did not notice that a woman, who showed not much more than a nose tip between her cloche and the upturned collar of her fur coat, had sauntered near him and now leaned on the railing at his elbow. He received merely the consciousness of a comforting feminine presence until the stranger suddenly snuggled against his arm and emitted a triumphant, cooing sound.

Alton jumped as though he had ab-

sorbed the full charge of an electric battery.

"Clara!" Then idiotically: "How

did you get here?"

"Same as you. By paying my passage. Now will you take me to Porto do Mar?"

"No," returned Alton, principally by reflex action. That was the right answer to that particular question. He

had made it before.

"I shan't insist," said Clara, perfectly at her ease. "Because I have no intention of letting you go there either. Oh, Alton!" The pressure against his arm became insistent, distracting, temptation itself. "How could you—how could you dream of it? Aunt Myra says it's the most notoriously pestilential hell on the coast. Managers die like flies; that's why they have to pay them such fortunes. And you—you—" Her voice became a wail, then smothered itself against him.

"It was the best chance of getting rich quick," said Alton shakily. "I'm as strong as a horse. It was a gamble, but I thought I could stand it."

"Well"—Clara issued her orders— "you said this boat stopped at Caracas. That's where we stop, and you take the near-civilized job." She added calmly: "Of course there'll be an Anglican clergyman there, but the captain can marry people, I suppose."

"But-but I thought you'd taken Gardiner," Alton said wildly, still unable to believe the blessed dream.
"Does he know?"

"He knows by now. I left a letter, and I didn't mince matters in it." Clara drew away and let him see a stormy and rebellious face. "Do you think," she demanded accusingly, "that I'd marry a murderer?"

"Oh, come!" Alton's masculine sense of fair play asserted itself. "It was a business risk. He didn't look at it that

way."

"Of course not," Clara agreed with ironic cordiality. "Few people understand what they really are. But he had a sneaking hope that you'd never come back. He's a clever man, Alton; he knew that I loved you. When you went over the cliff he looked-oh, he looked glad. He wouldn't have pushed you over, but he was so grateful to whatever was removing you out of his way. I hate people like that," cried Clara, the vixen. The next moment, Clara, the angel, was smiling beatifically into his eyes. "Well, I'm ready to be your parasite now," she purred. "Or do you intend to refuse me and throw me on the world?"

"The world?" Alton reflected, after he had answered the question satisfactorily. "That reminds me." He took off his hat and waved it over his head toward the place where the shore line had melted into the dusk. "Hey, there!" he shouted. "I apologize, old top! who

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You're all right!"

According to statistics, the average American woman spends less than sixtyfive dollars a year for clothes. Perhaps it's true, but we should like to see the woman who achieves that enviable record.

38

Such luck as happens once in 600,000,000,000 times, according to mathematical experts, came to a New York woman recently when she drew a perfect bridge hand of spades. And since spades are the highest trump, and since she wisely bid up her hand until she was able to redouble her opponent's double, she achieved the highest possible bridge score obtainable. Rumor has it that her husband once held a royal straight flush in poker.

The Benediction of Beauty

By Grace Stair

Author of "Hoytic Has the Papers," The Widow's Might," etc.



STARTING softly upstairs through the quiet house, that always seemed to be waiting so patiently in the silence of lower Fifth Avenue when he came home late in the evening, William Hamilton saw a light streaming in dim, blue radiance from the door of that mysterious sanctuary which was the bedroom of Caro, his wife. His rugged head came into the path of light and threw a firm silhouette against the wall at his right as he mounted the carpeted steps toward his own room at the farther end of the hall.

"William? Is that you?"

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It was absurd, thought he, motionless now, with a hand on the polished-wood stair rail, for his heart to beat faster at that gentle inquiry. What had an elderly bank president to do with the quickening pulses of love, with such unreasoning affection for a beautiful woman? So seldom in these crowded days and nights had Caro ever wanted him, ever asked for a second of his time that would have been given her so gladly.

"I want to talk to you for a moment, William. Can you come in?" Again that gentle voice, no more to be denied than her wish for serene isolation was otherwise to be violated.

The room where Caro nestled in the fine linen and laces of her DuBarry bed was one an artist would admire. One could be sure that this room contained all other vanities within walls reflecting the color of the sky of heaven, carpeted by one of France's treasures, an Aubusson, where roses were scattered as though culled by artistic fingers and dipped in all the colors of the rainbow.

But William Hamilton could look only toward the great, dark eyes, wide and lovely as a child's, in Caro's pointed face. He could never have his fill, it seemed, of looking at those beautiful eyes, whether in sunlight or the rose-tinted shadow of her night lamp, that made such exquisite contrast with her curling, yellow-gold hair. He knew all their moods, as well, searching them now a trifle like a lonesome little boy not yet wholly certain of his welcome.

So he stood there without a word, entirely unable to tell her, as he should have done, how she seemed to him, wrapped like a dear Baby Bunting in the white fur of her negligee.

"I've been waiting some time to remind you that Sallie and Henry are coming to dinner to-morrow night." She smiled at him. "I hope you haven't any other horrid business engagements."

"Oh, they're coming in to talk over the wedding, I suppose? The bank directors' dinner to-night couldn't possibly have been avoided. Horrid business engagements are very necessary, my dear." William did not sit down, but stood with his folded arms resting on the high, rolling footboard of the French-blue bed. Caro could think of no other word than "loom" to describe how he appeared, great height and broad shoulders above the tinted wood, his blue eyes shining with tender affection. Dear, inarticulate William, who sometimes made things so difficult for this very reason!

"But how have you amused yourself

to-day?"

"The luncheon at Mrs. Melton's was very brilliant, very gay," responded Caro languidly.

"I suppose you talked of nothing but

men," laughed William.

"On the contrary, we didn't speak of them at all. We discussed many interesting subjects." She watched William's ironical smile. "Don't you think it agreeable for women to lunch together, my friend? Or is it always necessary to have men, either in person or in thought?" Though she smiled, too, her air was one of tempered impertinence.

Already his thoughts had darted away, however, from luncheons and women's nonsense to the men—those bankers and business men he had just

left.

"Rich, of the Providence bank, was

at the dinner. I think that consolidation I told you about the other day is going through." He liked to believe that Caro shared an interest in his affairs. least.

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"I hadn't finished telling you about Mrs. Melton's party, since you were good enough to inquire." Cara's tone was mild without making her rebuke any the less cold and hard. "She used a complete service of Bohemian glass, and the silk cover on the table was of old Chinese brocade in yellow and gold Most original, of course; but a little too fantastic."

Patiently William listened, though his mind was still centered on his own subject: Rich of the Providence bank Just as he was about to speak, Cam

said:

"Will you hand me that little jar of cream on the dressing table, Silly-Bill? The white cream. Melanie forgot to give it to me to-night, and my face is

fearfully rough."

When he came to bring it to her he dared not stoop and lift her in his arms, for fear of disturbing this calm childwoman who never seemed to do more than light on the threshold of his hear as a butterfly does on a rose. Caro was so secure in the retreat she had built for herself on the foundation of their marriage.

"What were you going to say?" Caro gazed softly up at him, her fingen lifting little dabs of cream from the

opened jar.

William saw how naturally she did all this—aware, somehow, that, though she looked at him, her mind was really in her finger tips for that instant.

"Oh, nothing, nothing," he answered

sharply.

"Well, you should know by now that I am not interested in business. I don't enjoy being the wife of a man who thinks of nothing but business affairs."

"You're not original in that, at

least," he said bitterly. "But I'm afraid business affairs are going to interfere again with your desires. This consolidation I've been trying to tell you about ever since I came in here will make it impossible for me to leave New York for some time."

"What!" she cried, anger flaming now in her eyes. "You mean to say that I must give up my trip to Palm Beach? Why, I can't spend the next six weeks in town here! That's too

much to expect!"

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"Well, I can't interrupt my work," he said in a stubborn tone. "And you seem to have forgotten Sallie's marriage, anyway. You couldn't stay South that long and get back in time to help her." He saw a cynical smile curving her lip.

"You believe this time, do you, that she means to keep her word?"-

"I hope so," he replied.

"But I know that she wants to go to Palm Beach, too." Caro looked fixedly across the undulations of counterpane to William, back at his old position at the foot of her bed.

"But that would be abominable to disappoint Henry for the second time. His house has been waiting for her all these months." He frowned, as a thought occurred to him. "I hope you haven't been influencing her."

Ignoring the implication, Caro said:

"You forget that a house and a man can wait for a woman. And I've never known Sallie to sacrifice her desire for pleasure to anything or anybody."

"Yes, yes, that's true. I can't understand why a member of my family could be so selfish as Sallie appears."

"Well, I can't help what Sallie does. I've got to get away. My nerves are all shot to pieces." If Caro had thought her husband's championship of his niece arose from a deep understanding of the girl's motives, she might have been more conciliatory. But William's old-fashioned ideas on the sub-

ject of marriage extended beyond his own life to that of his dead sister's daughter. With an income of her own, almost as large as William's, Sallie Sears could find the world a dangerous playground, and marriage an uncertain haven, if she were forced into paths of unquestioning obedience to some misty conception of duty obsolete in her generation. Caro realized something of Sallie's restless longing, her fear lest marriage would mean greater transitions than she was prepared to make. And if there was cause to criticise her dalliance with young Henry Colt, there was equal reason to censure Henry, too, for having held her bound by a long engagement if he was not forceful enough to persuade her to marriage.

Baffled as he always was by Caro's constant desire for freedom from life's demands, William gazed somberly at

her for a moment.

"Well, I haven't canceled your drawing-room on the Seaboard. And perhaps you could persuade your brother Paul to go with you, if you're so determined."

The grease shining softly on her cheeks and about her mouth only made her face seem more illuminated when she smiled at him.

"Oh, thank you! That's a good idea about Paul! And you won't let them sell the reservation, will you, dear?" A little, pathetic sigh to touch the heart of William, her protector. "It's so cold in New York this winter."

Brightly she glanced from him to the

clock beside her lamp.

"What an hour! How long we must have been talking!" With one white arm she reached out toward the lamp's cord, politely indicating that as soon as he left she would be instantly ready to burrow into the pillows.

Shaking his head with sad impatience, he thought how hopeless it was to expect that she would ever under-

stand his needs.

"Good night!" said William as casually as he could, turning away from the bed.

Caro and William were already downstairs when Sallie came rushing into the library. The flame-colored chiffon of her skirt wrapped itself about her in points and billows of fiery hue as she kissed her uncle's cheek and went on to embrace Caro fervently. Sallie had fluffy brown hair and dancing hazel eyes that so exactly matched her sprightly charm.

"Oh, I'm so thrilled! I dashed in here ahead of Henry to tell you of my victory!" In Caro's arms she turned to look at William. "The battle is over and we are not to be married until spring. So I can go South with you, Caro darling, after all." Caro's smile for William was of a piece with her ironic mirth of the night before.

"I wish to believe, Sallie, that you're joking," he said from his place beside the high stone mantel, carved with Italian skill and design. William's expression was as severe as the pattern, his voice as cold and forbidding as the unwarmed stone.

"On the contrary, Uncle Willie, Henry advises me to go. I'm dead tired, and my nerves are on edge. It only retards our happiness," she concluded, in her accustomed tone of mild ridicule.

"Now you're in for a session." Caro laughed gently, though she saw how carefully William's eyes avoided meeting hers. At this Caro drew Sallie down beside her on a bergère.

"It's too bad you haven't more heart and less nerves," he exclaimed impatiently, glaring down at Sallie. "But Henry is a stupid fool. He should never have listened to you."

"Oh, he didn't listen! At least, not with good grace. I was just on the point of giving him back his ring. He saw that, and I guess he'd rather marry

a little late with his Sallie than not at all. Can't you understand that?"

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"Well, I cannot!" William thrust a clenched fist down into the pocket of his dinner coat.

"I'm sorry you feel so, beloved uncle. For I have made my peace with Henry. In a moment he'll be in from parking the car, pulling at his mustache and wondering what it's all about."

"Oh, you women!" William replied.
"You play always with a man's affection. You have no sense of honor; your word is given more to torture; you must be sure of a victim for your coquetries. And then you wonder why some men take to drink."

"Bravo!" Sallie clapped her hands, "Too bad there isn't more of an audience to hear this lecture on—what shall we say?—feminine psychology?"

William's face flushed a deep red, but he continued to speak in defense of his contentions.

"It's true! You treat your jewelry with more care; the works of your watch mean more than the minds and emotions of any man. No man could hope to elevate you to his sphere. You're too independent. And you, Sallie, use the pretext of your health to postpone your marriage. You're about as honest with that boy as the devil would be!"

"Ah, me! You force me to say it! I love Henry!" Her soft mockery went back to the days of Lydia Languish for its sentimental drawl. "But I'm too young to marry. I haven't had my fling." Now it was twentieth-century Sallie who spoke with a different tone of satire. "I haven't attained the degree of perfection necessary to enter the enchanted state of married bliss, perhaps; nor reached the exalted heights men live upon. Anyway, I'd feel too much the orphan with you and Caro away; for what is a poor girl to do, who is bound hand and foot?"

Caro interrupted at this:

"You are good, you two! But I must tell you, Sallie, that William has just announced that he could not go away now because of your approaching marriage."

"What? William not going to Palm Beach? Oh, boy! Won't we have fun? Play as hard as we like, and no-

lectures afterward."

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"Thank you," commented William dryly, moving away from the fireplace. "I'm going to look up Henry and tell him he must go with you. He should have been in here long ago, by the by. Where on earth was he going to park the car?"

"How should I know? He's probably sulking in the hall." Sallie jumped to her feet. "But don't take vengeance on me, please." She stopped her uncle as he went by, and, holding his coat lapels, she coaxed: "Just let me play as I will these last few months of liberty. After that I'll go safe and sane by Henry's side like any well-harnessed creature."

At last William smiled, to think of Sallie trotting sane and safe with any man. And to make her victory more certain she put her arms around his

neck, saying:

"If you insist on giving advice to Henry, be gentle with him!" Then, in the same cool, sweet way that the little Sallie had as a child, she kissed his cheek. "Do it for love of Sallie?" she whispered.

As William left the room, Sallie executed a pirouette with a wicked twin-

kle in her eye.

"How hard life is!" she sighed cheerfully, stopping in front of Caro's chair.

"Henry is the one to say that, you had child," chided Caro, smiling. "Because I don't believe you intend marrying him, you know."

"Yes, yes, I do, Caro." Sallie hesitated. "But I don't think I'll ever be as happy as I am just now. I don't

see why he's in such a hurry. I'm not quite sure I care as I should."

"If you loved Henry very deeply, you'd not be asking that." Something in Caro's voice made Sallie look at her intently. Memories and dreams, with sweet, secret hopes yet unfulfilled, thronged back of Caro's eyes.

"Well, if you're speaking of the love one reads about in books, I say men are too possessive to inspire it, and women far too occupied to need it. How can I tell whether I care for Henry? We've been too much together. Engaged for two years! Whoever heard of such a thing?"

Caro laughed outright at this, her introspective mood quite gone.

Sallie laughed, too, and asked:
"What's this I hear about Willie let-

ting you go to Palm Beach alone? Scandalous! It's against the principles of the family. You know that, don't you?" Sallie could never consider Caro in the relation of aunt to herself, being as she was too near her own age, too close to her own mode of life.

"William has some project on foot—a consolidation or something of the sort. If he went with me, he'd be here heart and brain, anyway. He's suggested having Paul go down."

Impulsively Sallie flung her arms

wide.

"That's great! I feel so free and happy, somehow, that I'd like to embrace the whole world. I don't know why I'm so eager to get down South this year. Maybe it's the thought of lying in the sand, watching the wheels go round at Bradley's, or having dinner at Whitehall. I wish I were there this very minute, don't you?" Caro, sitting slim and straight against the tapestry background of the old bergère, answered the question tacitly in the sudden opening of her eyes, wide with visions, before white lids drooped over them again.

"Oh, and you're adorable to-night,

too!" cried Sallie, in tones so sincere, so warm that they gave tribute to the beautiful young matron. "How did you ever happen to get into our family, anyway? You look like a holy image in your white satin, with your lovely, bright hair for a crown. Only your eyes are not blue like heaven. They are soft and dark, like velvet curtains before some shrine in a little, old, forgotten church."

"Sallie, darling! That's touching, really. I don't think any one ever said quite so beautiful a thing about me before." Caro's voice was hushed as though a charm would be broken if she spoke too firmly.

"Well, you are beautiful! Beside you, I feel like hiding my head."

"Nonsense, child! Don't be foolish! You'd not change your sweet little face with me nor any one else."

Just then a maid appeared in one doorway as the men came in at other end of the room. Sallie whispered:

"I do hope Henry isn't in such a bad humor that he spoils your dinner, dear."

But at their first glance of Henry's face they both knew that William had not injected much resignation into the spirit of the young man. Chagrin was easily read in his expressive face. The joyous smile, the air of good-fellow-ship, the ready sympathy which made him a great favorite with his set—all these were missing, and his dark-gray eyes reflected an inner conflict.

"Well, dear Henry," said Caro, giving him her hand, "don't feel too badly. I was not aware of this latest caprice of Sallie's."

"I suppose our social structure is responsible; one person must imitate the other, no matter what happens in consequence." Henry looked straight into Caro's eyes with firm resentment.

"Don't be unjust, Henry! It won't be long until spring, and that's a lovely time for a wedding."

"Yes, if it ever comes off," he re-

sponded ungraciously. His despairing glance turned to Sally for a brief steond.

"Never fear, dear boy," said William, laying his hand affectionately on his shoulder. "It will be all too soon for your tranquillity of mind."

"That's just what I told him," said Sally, as they went in to dinner.

During the hours Caro spent in preparation for her departure she had time for long meditation, even moments of remorse and regret lest the weeks of the immediate future might hold unforeseen difficulties. Once there was even a presentment of sorrow that made her beg William to tell her if he would be too lonely after she had gone.

"No, no my dear! You see your health and pleasure must come before any other thing."

William had always been like that she told herself, thinking back to those days in the South when he had first come into her life. She had been always oppressed and limited in a worldly sense by the noble poverty which had been her father's heritage from the Civil War. Her exceptional beauty had seemed to demand luxury from life, and she was stirred ot a strange restlessness within herself by a faint strain of Latin blood left in her veins by some Huguenot ancestor. sessed of charm since her girlhood, her eyes were always full of dreams that drove her, as she grew older, to study religious cults and read occult sciences in search of a perfect fulfillment. From the love stories of France, devoured surreptitiously during her school days, the idea of a grand passion had impressed itself upon her.

Then came William Hamilton, with his millions and a family pride vested in his mother and sister, eager to exchange all he had for her loveliness. When they were married Caro hoped that she had reached the port of romance, but life with her husband was too perfect, too tranquil; and when she realized how he loved her, she determined to keep him her slave, tormenting him with her insecure affections. Yet through all this she felt the restraint of William's puritanism, which held her respect even though it prevented him from entering with any zestful spirit into her little mundane amusements.

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Caro thought of all these forces which had enmeshed her, while here was Sallie, free to dare what Caro had never been given the chance to do. Since her baby days Sallie had held the world in her tiny hands, but in how different a fashion from Caro's dominion of beauty. Sallie was a typical fashionable young girl; at liberty to be polite and impolite; to be good, to be bad, to flirt; to be ignorant; to be a good friend and an enemy without pity; to disarm all feeling by originality of speech; to be honestly proud of smoking and drinking as the emancipated woman; to love the conquests so easily made, and yet to hold friendships at a great price. Sallie could not claim beauty, but that she did not need, since that elusive charm which surrounds the eternal childhood of all ingenuous spirits made her at once lovable and cruel.

And there was Henry Colt, most devoted and most persistent of Sallie's He knew the winning of Sallie would cost him dear; yet he had no thought of giving her up, and his promises, his ardent, fiery love-making had finally won her hand. But the moment she felt her liberty to be in danger, she became furious, pushing him to the limit of his endurance with her Then when she saw that she had hurt him too much, she would come with tears in her eyes to promise that she would be good, so surprisingly dear in her penitence that Henry could only gather her close in his arms, thanking Heaven for such a perfect gift.

The dinner hour at Bradley's, before playing began in earnest for the evening, was always exhilarating. One appeared to dine leisurely, yet always with a heart ready to thrill afterward at some unexpected stroke of fortune from the tables, at the appearance of some new beauty in the gaming room, even at the possibility of tragedy on the heels of an enormous loss. Caro Hamilton and Sallie Sears had come escorted by Paul Everly, Caro's brother, and a young architect named Claude Beckwith, eager for fresh excitement.

A few days after their arrival in Palm Beach, established at a corner table, Caro and the rest could survey the room, rapidly filling with men and women in the most exquisite evening costumes. Caro, in blond satin, and Sallie like a débutante in white, looked on with interest as each new group entered.

Suddenly Caro saw the captain bowing obsequiously beside a small table where he had just drawn out a chair for a tall, commanding figure of a man who sat down facing in Caro's general direction. Another instant and the dark eyes were roving casually from face to face, meeting Caro's, pausing for a steady second, going serenely about their calm circuit of the room. But tumult stayed on in Caro's heart where a strange, sweet peace was also singing. She knew what message for herself had come from those steady eyes, as gray black as a winter forest in the snowy haze of distance. For already those same eyes, out of all the throng on the beach, had encountered her own; they had followed her that very afternoon from a corner under the blossoming orange trees at the Everglades as she danced with Paul or Claude. She was fascinated by the eloquent sadness that lingered in his gaze, the championship of lost causes that dared hope.

"Who is that man across there?" Caro heard Sallie ask, "His ancestors

have worn plumes and lace, and at the same time commanded armies and served their king, I know. They ought to snare him for the movies."

devil, I grant you." "Handsome agreed Paul. "He's a foreigner of

some description."

Caro felt that he would surely be foreign to the perverse American desire for pleasure as an end in itself, but he would not be stranger to the delicate nuances of enjoyment. Witness, she thought, how much he expressed a very visible pleasure whenever he glanced

toward her across the room.

"If our prince continues his advances, I'll have to send for William, I think." Now Paul, who was accustomed to the tribute paid by the world to his sister's arresting beauty, was leaning forward to whisper in mock seriousness. He, too, had seen that this stranger's admiration was directed solely toward Caro, for all that he surveyed the entire party as he looked about the room so casually.

Then he had finished his dinner and was passing close to their table on his way from the room. Was this the end of the chapter, Caro asked herself as

they watched him go.

In the next two hours the gavety of the place, and the pleasurable excitement of meeting old acquaintances, crowded every other thought from their minds. Sallie was soon settled at a hazard table, where Paul and Claude joined the play to please her. gradually, as Caro grew tired of watching them, she became aware of the increasing crowd about a table at the end of the room.

"I'm going down to join that crowd," she explained. "You'll find me around here somewhere."

At first she could not see all the players, yet instinctively felt that some one of them was holding the attention of the rest. A big winner, perhaps!

Presently a young couple made their

way from the table's edge, breaking a path through the crowd so that Caro was instantly beside the green cloth, in full sight of the wheel and its whirling ball. It was the moment of tension.

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"Forty-nine on the black!" nounced the croupier, his long hands flashing above the heaps of chips,

But the heaviest loser at the board. the man who had attracted the notice of all this crowd, was quite oblivious to his latest loss. Across the table, he was already reaching out to make a new play. His white hands, with the tapering, sensitive fingers a surgeon might have envied, indicated no hesitation in his mind. Caro, watching his bent head, knew why she had been drawn to the table. It was not curiosity. She knew that within the next second those strange, gray eyes would lift to find her there.

A yellow bill from her little gold bag fluttered to the table, catching the croupier's eye. Followed a quick passing of brightly colored chips, and Caro was reaching out to play.

Seven, seventeen, and double O! Without looking, she knew the stranger had recognized her, too; for there were other chips thrown quickly upon hers on seven, seventeen, and double O!

Now she raised her eves to meet his. her heart stirring to a madness that had nothing whatever to do with the thrill

of the play in her blood.

The wheel spun and the little ball slipped into a groove that was not marked seven, seventeen or double O. But again Caro played the same combination of numbers, and again the man across the table followed, after a second's hesitation as if loath to hamper her chances with his record of ill fortune. Nor was it broken, that record, for again they lost. Caro had forgotten the crowd, swiftly taking the measure of her beauty, not heedless that the elements of romance and adventure were in their company.

At the third venture, however, double O won. Involuntarily there was a rusting murmur of comment, punctuated by little shrieks of excitement from the women. Principally they were thinking how the man's luck had changed at last. And surely his luck had been marvelously transformed. To see him play now was a revelation. Always he won, no matter how absurd his chances seemed, thought Caro, who had long since dropped out of the play. Thousands of dollars he was staking now on a single turn of the shining arc. It was a sensation.

Caro speculated now on his nationality, his rank. One did not acquire his quiet air of assurance unless through contacts with the world—the world of fashion, of wealth, of power. And yet his eyes were so gentle, his smile so frankly given to her in these moments of understanding, that she felt a philosopher's soul beneath it all.

Abruptly the voice of the croupier

startled the spectators.

"The bank is closed," he said simply, preparing to leave the table, while the crowd scattered to spread the news that a stranger had broken the bank.

But the victor of the evening was speaking to Caro across the deserted

colors of the table.

"Is it permitted, madame, that I thank you for my good fortune? I shall take this as an augury for the future—that success will attend me whenever you are near."

Caro listened almost solemnly to his words, standing with thoughtful eyes downcast. Around the end of the table he was coming toward her.

"Fortune has used me cruelly these past few days, never to let me speak to you until now." She looked up quickly to see which she might believe: the admiration in his eyes or the light gallantry of his smiling lips. Long since Caro had learned that she must always take discount for her beauty

when she sought truth in the heart of a

"I was at the end of my rope," he added simply, with the faintest possible accent.

"So far as that?" commented Caro, at last, smiling in faint sarcasm.

"As far as that," echoed the young man seriously. "When a woman provokes, we are obliged to follow. It is a homage we render." He stopped as if enchanted. "I have never seen so much beauty," he finished quietly.

Flattered she was, surely; but not content. The emotion aroused in her heart was too deep for compliments.

A cool hand on her arm, and Sallie's

voice cried gayly:

"Caro! Was it you who broke the bank? Tell us this most exciting news!" Paul and Claude had also come up and were regarding the stranger with polite scrutiny.

"I didn't win, Sallie, dear. It was

this gentleman."

Punctiliously he bowed, heels clicking together in salute.

"I am John Renzey, at your service," he addressed them.

A moment's hesitation.

"Miss Sears, Mr. Beckwith, and my brother, Mr. Everly." Caro introduced the others in rapid, toneless nervousness, acutely conscious of Sallie's wide eyes. Just a little she was afraid of her young relative's powers of penetration.

"You've had a wonderful bit of luck," observed Paul in frank admira-

tion.

"It means something to break the bank here," supplemented Claude enviously.

Again Renzey bowed, repeating quietly:

"It is agreed that I have had a wonderful bit of luck."

"There's certainly plenty of money floating about here to-night," said Claude. "Money and jewels enough to ransom all the kings left in Europe."

Renzey favored his new acquaintance with a single shrewd glance of ap-

"If all the diamonds here were sparkling water, one would need never be thirsty," he cried.

At this Sallie cried indignantly:

"Then you think Americans know only the value of diamonds!" She had been disappointed to find mild dreams of romance shattered by the sound of such a handsome man's so ordinary name. "John Renzey" might belong to

anybody.

"No, no, mademoiselle! Not at all! But to-night we surely must have seen most of the diamonds that have been mined and brought over from the countries on the other side. Yet the diamonds are as nothing when beauty is in view." He bowed to Sallie, but his eyes sought Caro as he stood erect once more.

This was better, decided Sallie, laughing across at him with all the freedom of her joyous nature shining in her

eyes.

"That's always been my impression," she said. "Life and beauty are too brilliant to be dimmed by a few sparkling gems. Extravagance in anything is such poor taste."

"Henry ought to hear you say that," laughed Paul. "It would give-"

But Sallie had interrupted imperiously.

"Oh, Paul! Why spoil a perfectly good time? Just the mention of oldfashioned names makes me nervous."

All this time Caro had been conscious of John Renzey's regard, that enveloped her in spite of his apparent attention to the general conversation. had always been used to admiration; but this was different. Sometimes her heart swelled with pleasure to feel that people were impressed with her beauty: at other times she had been indignant; but now her very soul seemed thrilled at this conquest. Even Sallie had not held his thought with her gay badinage. Were they two guided by invisible hands, or was she only hypnotized by the charm of Old World manners? When his eyes rested ardently on her face she appeared not to see. Yet. if she could have known, his vanity exulted because of her reticence, her highbred air of ignoring his adulation.

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Having learned the stranger's name. Paul Everly was surprised to discover that, like themselves, he was staying at the Everglades Club. But further than that he could find out nothing. Who had sponsored his membership was a mystery, since no one seemed to have the slightest knowledge of his background. His very name was noncommittal, though his slight accent bespoke Continental training. Still, he was established at a club so well known for its exclusiveness that he must have had influential backing to have been admitted. That was that, as far as Paul could discern, and there the matter rested, for Renzey made little effort to acquire a circle of acquaintances, though he seemed to enjoy being with their small party.

One Saturday evening, very late, Caro and the rest of the quartet stopped at Bradley's to watch the play. The place was crowded, but presently Caro, seated alone for the instant in a quiet corner, saw John Renzey detach himself from a group at one of the tables. Her eyes dwelt pensively on his face, as he approached, while she noted the fine line of his delicate nostrils, the curve of his lip that was almost feminine. Yet his serene forehead and calm eyes dominated his countenance to an extent which obliterated the impression

of weakness.

Surrounded by all the gay assemblage, Caro knew intuitively that John Renzey was abstracted, perhaps a little homesick for some familiar scene dear to his heart. But she was scarcely prepared for his question when it came.

"Will you go to church with me in the morning? To a quaint church down along the shore to which we would drive in time for the twelveo'clock service?"

It touched Caro, in spite of her amazement to have him speak so sim-

"You are like a guardian angel, yourself, in that heavenly blue," he remarked, half to himself, almost impersonally, as an artist might comment. "In my home we have one religion and one country," he was adding softly, sitting down beside her. "I have observed that your people do not go to church much, save as a fashion. With us, we have as much emotion for the church as for love. Yet we never forget the one for the other."

"From what I read of your character, you can't be so measured in the emotions of love or religion that you might not be in danger of forgetting the one for the other."

"Until now I have never been tempted away from my heavenly saints." He laughed in soft impudence.

In the end she had promised to go with him; and when they set out next morning in Renzey's motor, the very day itself seemed attuned to worship. Once they had left behind the tintedstucco palaces of Ocean Boulevard the smooth road might have been on a desert island, for all the stretch of sea and sandy shore. Against the blue, the palm trees were like branched candlesticks, waiting for the sun to touch their tops to golden flame. Misty spray dissolved in the sunlight on the beach, where little, chanting waves made incessant music.

They found the little church sheltered in a grove of palms. Caro's responsive heart thrilled at the solemn rituals, while John was satisfied merely to have her beside him in the house of prayer. His soul went out in worship, though his devotions were mingled with

gratitude for the granting of his wish to see her beauty in this holy setting. He had been quite right to feel instinctively that such loveliness belonged as much to shrines as to the haunts of the world.

But when Caro had come back to the club, she shut herself in her room to write to William, refusing even to have luncheon with John or the others. She tried to make her letter full of news of their gayeties and observations on the life about them. But she had never been used to tender words with him. whether spoken or written, so when she finished by almost begging him to come South and join her, she felt subconsciously that William would read into the sentences imperiousness rather than the pleading of her heart. But her plan to remain in Palm Beach a month longer would give him ample time to make his arrangements.

She had just slipped the letter into its envelope when Sallie entered with several notes in her hand, ready for the post. She leaned over the back of Caro's chair to kiss her cheek.

"Well, goody-goody! I hear you went to church this morning while I was sleeping. Didst say a prayer for wayward Sallie?"

Caro, looking dreamily through the open window to the glimpse of the quiet lake beyond, merely answered gently:

"I think sometimes that none of us go to church often enough to learn what peace can really be, dear little Sallie!"

"Oh, rats! Who wants peace?" laughed the irreverent Sallie. "Let me tell you what I once found in a book of memoirs we had to read in school. The Margravine of Bayreuth must have been some girl in her day, for she wrote: "The old and the ugly generally fall to God's share." And I say, 'Ain't it the truth?' And I asks you to meditate on that a while."

But Caro made no reply; and after a

moment Sallie inquired whether she had any letters to mail.

"I've just finished one to William."

A dancing step or two sent Sallie

whirling in glee.

"I'll bet anything I know what you've said, 'cause I'll bet I've said the same thing to Henry: that we want to stay

down here a little longer."

Now Caro turned to scan the girl's face. Her eyes dropped the length of the piquant form, wrapped in a long velveteen coat of sapphire blue over her white dress. Caro's face was serious, not to be moved by the happiness in Sallie's ingenuous gaze.

"Oh, Sallie! That's hardly fair of you! I've written William to join me. You've got to go North and get ready

for the wedding."

"Piker!" taunted Sallie. "You promised to help me! I'll go North when you go. And as for Henry, I'm only holding him back from bondage a few longer. Ungrateful though he is, he'll appreciate that liberty some day when it's gone." She "Oh, auntie, chortled in wicked glee. auntie! My Uncle Willie'll be mad at you, though! You promised to come back early. And he's so terribly honest that, if he gives his word, he gives it for always and always and expects everybody to do the same thing.'

Like a rhapsody the days passed after that; the promenades, moments spent on the shores of a blue sea, the gay words, the innocent tête-à-têtes, created an atmosphere of languorous desire. It never occurred to Caro to resist the charming companionship of John Renzey, so much the master of gallantry, who knew so well how to cloak tenderest admiration in a jesting word that could not alarm the conscience.

Then came the morning when Caro received William's letter, sent in reply to hers. Sally had been right. He did not like the suggestion to stay on at Palm Beach; he reminded Caro that she had promised to come home at the end of six weeks. Perversely inspired by the severe, cold tone of his letter, Caro wrote, in effect: Very well. He could stay at home, but she had no intention of returning. he co

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When she went to look for consolation from Paul, she found him just turning away from the desk with a tele-

gram in his hand.

"Isn't this the limit?" he asked, holding out the yellow skip. "I've got to go back to New York right away."

"Business, I suppose?" inquired his

sister sarcastically.

"You needn't be so sore about it. It won't make any difference to you. You'll soon be going home, yourself; and Renzey's still here to dance attendance on you."

"Oh, don't be vulgar, Paul! You talk as if John were a rank idler. He's

so much finer than that!"

"So-o-o! Well, you just promise me that you won't coquette too much. Those fellows are apt to be serious and persistent where a pretty woman is involved."

"I'll promise nothing!" retorted Caro haughtily. "And I'm not going home as soon as you expect."

Paul thrust his hands into the pock-

ets of his golf knickers.

"I'm almost beginning to agree with William that you set a bad example for Sallie. Henry won't stand for any more delays; no man would, the way you two women play around."

"Sallie knows her own mind," Caro replied coolly. "I'm not responsible

for what she does."

With a gesture of indifference, as if he gave up the problem, Paul went off to make his arrangements,

As for John Renzey, he had almost forgotten the purpose which had brought him to Palm Beach in his supreme enjoyment of this woman whom he considered the loveliest of her sex. There were many times when she seemed proof against his seductive admiration, when the enveloping caress in his regard did not ruffle the surface of her calm. When he held her hand for a moment, he would find it cool as a young girl's might be; and when he spoke in words of tenderness or passion, she mocked him. Like all American women, it seemed, she wished only for an adventure, feeling all the while that platonism was a virtue. Well, he'd give her as much romance as she would take, without fear of being considered serious. How little he knew or realized the hidden fires that blazed in Caro's heart, or how eager she was to embrace life's greatest gift!

Sallie and Claude Beckwith viewed the progress of the affair in different ways. Claude smiled often at the little comedy of romance. But Sallie felt left out of something that seemed beautiful. She was willing to be amused by him, too; and when his devotion seemed all for Caro, Sallie could only rage and declare unhappily that it was stupid for Henry to have let her go away from him. She drifted out on the sea of discontent. She, too, longed to be in love.

John Renzey's surest appeal to Caro was to ask her again to go to church with him. Was that to be a point in the future, she asked herself? Did he desire her to accept his faith?

But with it all, Caro decided that for a while there must be no more tête-à-têtes. She dreaded the danger, yet her heart hungered for it. More and more acutely she was sensible of the great difference between the cold, calm acceptance of the average husband—William especially, who never gave a thought to the romantic desires that live in every woman's heart—and the gracious attentions of John, which always spoke of undying love. One might imagine that, like the knights of old, he'd stake his life on his lady's favor. She

found herself imagining situations in which she and John figured, but never William.

Then came an evening when a pure, argent moon drew a phosphorescent glow from the verdant earth and covered every object with a silvery patina. Sallie and Caro, Claude and John, had been playing bridge on Claude's houseboat. All about them Lake Worth scintillated, spreading magic pathways to the shore. The lights of West Palm Beach, the yellow headlights on motors moving across the bridge, the squares of warm brilliance shining through the windows at Montmartre only emphasized the cool lunar majesty.

The bridge game finished, the four came ashore. But there was no motor waiting, as John had ordered. Leisurely they set out to stroll along the trail, where two empty chairs, returning to the club, suddenly appeared in single file like a genie's gift. Before Caro could prevent it, Sallie and Claude had hopped into one of them, calling:

"Come on, let's ride around the lake trail. It's too gorgeous to go indoors." There was nothing for Caro but to accept John's hand, assisting her into

the second chair.

"You wouldn't mind if I went on home, rather than ride, would you, John?" she asked softly. Caro was a veritable spirit of the moonlight, in green, with a chiffon scarf about her throat.

For many minutes there was no sound save the scrunch of pebbles beneath the wheels, as their chair boy propelled the vehicle. John sat silent, his head drooping, visibly absorbed by some deep idea.

"What's the matter? Are you in a

bad humor, John?"

"No! Not at all. I am just trying to find an answer to a problem."

"Of psychology?"

"No!" His head was raised, as he looked at her abruptly. "Perhaps you

can help me. Yes, I think you could, better than any one else."

"I?" she cried in simulated astonish-

ment.

"I want to know," he demanded gravely, "with your youth, intelligence, and beauty, how you expect to live without love?"

"Without love!" she repeated. "But I love my husband. He is a wonderful man. Perhaps I haven't spoken of

him often, but-"

"And you are here, so far from him, voluntarily?" John's reproachful voice lingered over the words. "I am beginning to think in America 'husband' has a special sentiment, that permits one to travel, to be amused, with no thought of obligations. When one loves, a separation is unhappiness. It bruises the heart."

Caro laughed gayly, and yet she thought how true were his words, how well he understood the modern life.

"Thank Heaven, then, we're in America. We certainly do not live for men or husbands alone here."

Silence, and then:

"No? And what do you live for?"

—a crescendo of tempered irony.

"For our families, for society, for our friends. We must develop our own individuality; our spirits must progress."

Stupefied, he regarded her.

"You mock me?"

"Not at all," she declared earnestly.

"And that satisfies?" he queried.

"Perfectly."

"And you," he persisted; "have you no other desires?"

Caro hesitated for a moment.

"I have need of a solid, durable affection, which I possess." Reserve and dignity were in her tone.

His voice was low with deep emotion, then, as he said: "I have divined that you have a beautiful, spiritual quality. And I felt astonished, charmed." His gaze that dared not seek hers turned moody eyes to the shining surface of the lake.

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After a little Caro made an effort to speak banteringly, but in her heart she was thrilled by his serious attitude. They said nothing more until the chair stopped on the curved drive at the door of the club.

"I think I shall say good night," she said. "I am tired." She held out her hand, which he pressed to his lips before he turned away without a word,

In her room his curious manner, his words, the deep tones of his voice, returned again and again to haunt her. Since Adam's time this ruse of curiosity has been a factor in the soul's demands, a means for man to persuade woman that the tree of life belongs to those who love. Caro stood before her dressing table, looking into the glass with eyes that saw far beyond her reflected, beautiful image,, in the soft lights of the room. What was it John had said? A spiritual quality. She knew an awakened sense of regret, a wish for the ability to understand this madness that was enslaving her.

Suddenly she heard a faint creak at the French windows across the room, which opened onto a long balcony with steps leading into the gardens at the back of the maisonettes. Caro's heart beat rapidly, almost deafening her. She held her breath, the better to listen. Slowly the window swung back. A man's figure appeared black against the moonlight; another step, and John Renzey was bowing before her, auda-

cious, compelling.

Her voice strangling in her throat, Caro cried: "What do you want? How dare you come in here? Oh! Go, please, go at once!" The feeling of timidity was her first thought.

But John advanced swiftly and, dropping on one knee before her, said:

"I have come to ask an audience as one does from a queen. On my honor!" Caro's face was deadly pale. "If you had honor, you'd not have done this—breaking in here like an apache." She tried to keep her voice from betraying her.

At this John's face went pale, then

flushed crimson.

"So this is all you mean by your coquetries? I give admiration, an homage of my heart. I love you, and you call me robber."

But Caro, turning half away from his kneeling figure, put her hands over her

ears and would not listen.

"I love you," he repeated fervidly.

The warm flame of his passion touched her; she felt the blood mounting to her head like wine. While she stood motionless, he rose and took her hand, holding it gently. The more she wished to yield, the more fiercely she resisted. She loved this man; she knew it now; and, in spite of fear, her soul exulted.

Hurriedly she snatched her hand

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"But I do not love you!" she lied desperately. "Go, go, at once!'

"Are you sending me away for all

time?" he asked slowly.

Caro was trembling with fear, fighting for control over herself. "I am—most certainly! I've never given you cause to think that I cared for you in any way! In any way!" she repeated, stamping her foot as she whirled upon him. At that moment she would have been capable of driving him out by force, lest all her resolution to duty vanish in her submission to his will.

Now his humiliation was complete. His love that had seemed a miracle had lost its power; it lay like a dead thing in his heart. At the same time her hysterical manner frightened him. Without another word, John turned back to the window and went out.

Minutes passed in silence. He was gone, and Caro was victorious. But what a bitter triumph for her heart! She felt her knees go weak with the reaction from this struggle, so that she sank into the nearest chair. Though she might shut her eyes, strive to shut out of her mind this strange episode, she still beheld John on his knees before her, pleading for her love. He had not considered her marriage a barrier. Yet, in all this, why should she feel joy, a sensation intense to a degree she had never known before? What superior force had he used? Valiantly she tried to dismiss these troubled thoughts as she made ready for bed. This could not last, she consoled herself. But sleep did not come easily. Disquieting memories thronged her brain.

For several days Caro refused to leave her room. She had been too shaken; she could not regain her calm in a few hours. John Renzey had contemplated the idea of a fishing trip to Miami, as an escape; but when Mrs. Hamilton failed to appear around the club his vanity was soothed. The little Sally Sears was there, however, making a great point of talking to him. Although he had not had any inclination to flirt with her after their first meeting, she became a solace to him now. She was an original type, and on that account sometimes a bit disturbing, but one could always feel agreeable with her. John began to wonder if she really was engaged, for he never saw her wearing a ring.

Toward the close of the third day of seclusion Sallie came upstairs to talk

with Caro.

"I'm worried about you, dear!" she exclaimed, finding Caro reading on the chaise longue, dressed in a pale-blue peignoir that sported trousers and a delicate lining in salmon pink.

"Why worry, Sallie, my child?" answered Caro, betraying no distress of spirit or body. "I came to Palm Beach to rest, and I'm resting. Nothing could be more reasonable, surely."

"Excepting that it isn't like you to be

reasonable," amended Sallie dryly. "However, I'm having a glorious time. You know, at first I thought you'd done something to John, because he was so stiff and morose. But he's really quite a lamb, and we've been having a wonderful time. I had no idea he and I would hit it off so well, or that I could like him so much."

"But Henry wouldn't advise your flirting with Mr. Renzey."

"Oh! So it's 'Mr. Renzey.' But why?"

"Because he's too dangerous. You called him a lamb, just now; but he might be a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"Oh, really! Have you found him so?"

Caro laughed negligently.

"It doesn't matter about me! I'm safely married. Anyway, I don't believe he likes Americans." She looked at Sallie's eager face. "I wouldn't have too much to do with him, dear. After all, we don't know who he is."

Nevertheless, this conversation decided Caro to forsake her rôle of the hermit. She came down to the dining room for luncheon, without finding any of her party. All day she tried to amuse herself with bridge and gossip, but her thoughts were on Sallie and John Renzey. Then the bridge game broke up and she wandered idly toward the tennis courts, to find the other two at last, strolling along the walk.

"Hello, Caro, dear!" greeted Sallie. "Welcome back to our company."

John took Caro's hand and kissed it formally; if he felt any emotion, it could not be perceived. In his eyes were no longer the flames of devotion, nor was the warmth she remembered to be detected in the tones of his voice or visible in the expression of his lips. This was the man who, so short a time before, had declared almost with violence that he loved her. Where was the passion that had made him so eloquent, so

ardent? As she watched him, Caro shivered ever so slightly.

"This is a dangerous hour," observed Sallie. "The sun is going to bed."

"Isn't it superb?" sighed John. "And we are going for a walk along the sands. Didn't you tell me, Sallie, that was your way of forgetting the past? To hear nothing except the voices of the sea?"

Caro winced to hear Sallie's name spoken so easily. She laughed with a bitter inflection.

"She's quite capable of forgetting that she's engaged to a man in New York, without walking on the sand."

"Oh, thank you, Aunt Caro!" responded Sallie, her eyes flashing resentment.

John viewed the little scene with tranquil manner. The wound to his vanity alone would have been protection against regret. He realized, inspired by a species of amused pity, that Caro wished to maintain an association for which he was not prepared, no matter how much she might be repenting her hasty action. Her beauty left him calm; he felt that he could talk to her lucidly. And sensing her disappointment at this, a smile, cruelly masculine, marked the restoration of his pride, made whole by woman's defeat.

Nothing in her life had ever surprised Caro so much as to have Sallie and John go on at last without even a suggestion that she go with them.

The next morning, however, John purposely sought Caro, who received him with dignity. Without preamble he said:

"I've come to offer my compliments, and ask pardon. In an access of folly I lost my head, which I regret. I can only offer in excuse that the lady was so beautiful that no man could have resisted."

"I have no right to withhold what you ask," remarked Caro softly, mak-

ing no expression with pal der feet Caro ha crat.

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ing no effort to hide the old, familiar expression in her eyes. All in white, with pale-blue hat and scarf, her slender feet shod likewise in pastel blue, Caro had never looked more the aristocrat.

Her loveliness still affected John in spite of himself, so that he was obliged

to interrupt hurriedly.

"I'd give a great deal to discover the secret of your American stoicism," he admitted with false seriousness. "For your coquetries left me with no defense. But I know you are very just;

therefore, I hope for pardon."

At this juncture Sally entered the sunny court where they were sitting. She was all in yellow, like a living sunbeam, swinging from her hand one of the hunting canes made famous by Edward VII. of England. John's smile at once indicated his pleased expectancy. She had pinned on her shoulder a tiny, lace-frilled nosegay he had sent her that morning.

From the bouquet Sallie now reached for a bachelor button, and while she greeted Caro and John impartially her fingers were busy fastening the flower

in his coat lapel.

"With Sallie's thanks," she told him, looking archly into his eyes. Then to Caro she added: "Aren't I grand this

morning, wearing posies?"

As he watched her, John thought that, though Caro might be the most beautiful woman in the world, Sallie could amuse one with her originality of spirit.

"Hello, everybody!" exclaimed Claude Beckwith, who had just come up. "Wouldn't you people like to go out on the house boat for a while? There's a wonderful breeze, and some of the boats are racing this morning."

Sallie, with her air of sans gêne, took

complete possession of John. Soon they were laughing together, their steps becoming slower and slower as they walked along the lake shore, hardly conscious of Caro and Claude ahead of them. But Caro had not been insensible of their intimate conversation that flew with them on light wings of delight, for all their feet were laggard.

"Rather taken with Sallie, isn't he?" laughed Claude, startling Caro with his apparent reading of her thought.

"I hope she has enough honor to think of her engagement to Henry Colt," Caro replied dully. "Of course it was stupid of Henry not to have come down here with us, but I certainly don't want to have this responsibility on my shoulders."

Claude looked at her with an oblique glance. Was she sincere, or was she too deeply interested herself? For her part, however, Caro had an inspiration. She would write to Henry that very

night, before she slept.

But from this time on Caro followed the course of this growing friendship with an anguish she could scarcely control. She tried to act in a disinterested manner whenever John and Sallie were with her. She and Sallie had always been so confidential with one another that it was hard to appear natural. The ache in Caro's heart was so deep, so profound. Why should she be troubled by these extraordinary sentiments? She, who had always been so serene? Was it merely as a friend of Henry's that she viewed this growing intimacy in the light of a calamity? She talked about Henry incessantly; in spite of the amusement and placid scorn she saw in John's eyes, she reminded them how jealous Henry would be if he could see them together so constantly.

TO BE CONCLUDED.





Art and the Broncho

By O. Henry
Author of "The Shamrock and the Paim."
"The Roads of Destiny," etc.



UT of the wilderness had come a painter. Genius, whose coronations alone are democratic, had woven a chaplet of chaparral for the brow of Lonny Briscoe. Art, whose divine expression flows impartially from the fingertips of a cowboy or dilettante emperor, had chosen for a medium the boy artist of the San Saba. The outcome—seven feet by twelve of besmeared canvas—stood, gilt-framed, in the lobby of the capitol.

The legislature was in session; the capital city of that great Western State was enjoying the season of activity and profit that the congregation of the Solons bestowed. The boarding houses were corralling the easy dollars of the gamesome lawmakers. The greatest State in the West, an empire in area and resources, had arisen and repudiated the old libel of barbarism, lawbreaking, and bloodshed. Order reigned within her borders. Life and property were as safe there, sir, as anywhere among the corrupt cities of the effete East. Pillow shams, churches, strawberry feasts, and habeas corpus flourished. With impunity might the tenderfoot ventilate his "stovepipe" or his theories of culture. The arts and sciences received nurture and subsidy. And, therefore, it behooved the legislature of this great State to make appropriation for the purchase of Lonny Briscoe's immortal painting.

Rarely has the San Saba country contributed to the spread of the fine arts. Its sons have excelled in the solider graces, in the throw of the lariat, the manipulation of the esteemed .45, the intrepidity of the one-card draw, and the nocturnal stimulation of towns from undue lethargy; but, hitherto, it had not been famed as a stronghold of æsthetics, Lonny Briscoe's brush had removed that disability. Here, among the limestone rocks, the succulent cactus, and the drought-parched grass of that arid valley, had been born the boy artist.

Why he came to woo art is beyond postulation. Beyond doubt, some spore of the afflatus must have sprung up within him in spite of the desert soil of San Saba. The tricksy spirit of creation must have incited him to attempted expression and then have sat hilarious among the white-hot sands of the valley, watching its mischievous work. For Lonny's picture, viewed as a thing of art, was something to have driven away dull care from the bosoms of the critics.

The painting-one might almost say panorama-was designed to portray a typical Western scene, interest culminating in a central animal figure, that of a stampeding steer, life size, wild eyed, fiery, breaking away in a mad rush from the herd that, close ridden by a typical cow-puncher, occupied a position somewhat in the right background of the picture. The landscape presented fitting and faithful accessories. Chaparral, mesquite, and pear were distributed in just proportions. A Spanish dagger plant, with its waxen blossoms in a creamy aggregation as large as a waterbucket, contributed floral beauty and variety. The distance was undulating

prairie, bisected by stretches of the intermittent stream peculiar to the region lined with the rich green of live-oak and water-elms. A richly mottled rattlesnake lay coiled beneath a pale-green clump of prickly pear in the foreground. A third of the canvas was ultramarine and lake white—the typical Western sky and the flying clouds, rainless and feathery.

Between two plastered pillars in the commodious hallway near the door of the chamber of representatives stood the painting. Citizens and lawmakers passed there by twos and groups and sometimes crowds to gaze upon it. Many-perhaps a majority of them-had lived the prairie life and recalled easily the familiar scene. Old cattlemen stood, reminiscent and candidly pleased, chatting with brothers of former camps and trails of the days it brought back to mind. Art critics were few in the town, and there was heard none of that jargon of color, perspective, and feeling such as the East loves to use as a curb and a rod to the pretensions of the artist. 'Twas a great picture, most of them agreed, admiring the gilt frame-larger than any they had ever seen.

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Senator Kinney was the picture's champion and sponsor. It was he who so often stepped forward and asserted, with the voice of a broncho buster, that it would be a lasting blot, sir, upon the name of this great State if it should decline to recognize in a proper manner the genius that had so brilliantly transferred to imperishable canvas a scene so typical of the great sources of our State's wealth and prosperity, land, and —er—live stock.

Senator Kinney represented a section of the State in the extreme west—four hundred miles from the San Saba country—but the true lover of art is not limited by metes and bounds. Nor was Senator Mullens, representing the San Saba country, lukewarm in his belief that the State should purchase the painting of his constituent. He was advised that the

San Saba country was unanimous in its admiration of the great painting by one of its own denizens. Hundreds of connoisseurs had straddled their bronchos and ridden miles to view it before its removal to the capital. Senator Mullens desired reëlection, and he knew the importance of the San Saba vote. He also knew that with the help of Senator Kinney—who was a power in the legislature—the thing could be put through.

Now, Senator Kinney had an irrigation bill that he wanted passed for the benefit of his own section, and he knew Senator Mullens could render him valuable aid and information, the San Saba country already enjoying the benefits of similar legislation. With these interests happily dovetailed, wonder at the sudden interest in art at the State capital must, necessarily, be small. Few artists have uncovered their first pioture to the world under happier auspices than did Lonny Briscoe.

Senators Kinney and Mullens came to an understanding in the matters of irrigation and art while partaking of long drinks in the café of the Empire Hotel.

"H'm!" said Senator Kinney. don't know. I'm no art critic, but it seems to me the thing won't work. It looks like the worst kind of a chromo to me. I don't want to cast any reflections upon the artistic talent of your constituent, senator, but I, myself, wouldn't give six bits for the picture-without the frame. How are you going to cram a thing like that down the throat of a legislature that kicks about a little item in the expense bill of six hundred and eighty-one dollars for rubber erasers for a whole term? It's wasting time. I'd like to help you, Mullens, but they'd guy us out of the senate chamber if we were to try it."

"But you don't get the point," said Senator Mullens, in his deliberate tones, tapping Kinney's glass with his long forefinger. "I have my own doubts as to what the picture is intended to represent—a bullfight or a Japanese allegory—but I want this legislature to make an appropriation to purchase. Of course, the subject of the picture should have been in the State historical line, but it's too late to have the paint scraped off and changed. The State won't miss the money and the picture can be stowed away in a lumber room where it won't annoy any one. Now, here's the point to work on, leaving art to look after it-self—the chap that painted the picture is the grandson of Lucien Briscoe."

"Say it again," said Kinney, leaning his head thoughtfully. "Of the old,

original Lucien Briscoe?"

"Of him. 'The man who,' you know. The man who carved the State out of the wilderness. The man who settled the Indians. The man who cleaned out the horse thieves. The man who refused the crown. The State's favorite son.

Do you see the point now?"

"Wrap up the picture," said Kinney. "It's as good as sold. Why didn't you say that at first, instead of philandering along about art? I'll resign my seat in the senate and go back to chain carrying for the county surveyor the day I can't make this State buy a picture calcimined by a grandson of Lucien Briscoe. Did you ever hear of a special appropriation for the purchase of a home for the daughter of 'One-eved' Smothers? Well, that went through like a motion to adjourn, and old One-eved never killed half as many Indians as Briscoe did. About what figure had you and the calciminer agreed upon to sandbag the treasury for?"

"I thought," said Mullens, "that may-

be five hundred---"

"Five hundred!" interrupted Kinney, as he hammered on his glass with a lead pencil and looked around for a waiter. "Only five hundred for a red steer on the hoof delivered by a grandson of Lucien Briscoe! Where's your State pride, man? Two thousand is what it'll be. You'll introduce the bill and I'll get up

on the floor of the senate and wave the scalp of every Indian old Lucien ever murdered. Let's see, there was something else proud and foolish he did. wasn't there? Oh, yes; he declined all emoluments and benefits he was entitled to. Refused his head-right and veterandonation certificates. Could have been governor, but wouldn't. Declined a pension. Now's the State's chance to pay It'll have to take the picture, but then it deserves some punishment for keeping the Briscoe family waiting so long. We'll bring this thing up about the middle of the month, after the tax bill is settled. Now, Mullens, you send over, as soon as you can, and get me the figures on the cost of those irrigation ditches and the statistics about the increased production per acre. I'm going to need you when that bill of mine comes up. I reckon we'll be able to pull along pretty well together this session and maybe others to come, eh, senator?"

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Thus did fortune elect to smile upon the boy artist of the San Saba. Fate had already done her share when she arranged his atoms in the cosmogony of creation as the grandson of Lucien Bris-

coe.

The original Briscoe had been a pioneer both as to territorial occupation and in certain acts prompted by a great and simple heart. He had been one of the first settlers and crusaders against the wild forces of nature, the savage, and the shallow politician. His name and memory were revered equally with any upon the list comprising Houston. Boone, Crockett, Clark, and Green. He had lived simply, independently, and unvexed by ambition, and died likewise. Even a less shrewd man that Senator Kinney could have prophesied that his State would hasten to honor and reward his grandson, come out of the chaparral at even so late a day.

And, so before the great picture by the door of the chamber of representatives at frequent times for many days could be found the breezy, robust form of Senator Kinney and be heard his clarion voice reciting the past deeds of Lucien Briscoe in connection with the handiwork of his grandson. Senator Mullens' work was more subdued in sight and sound, but directed along identical lines.

Then, as the day for the introduction of the bill for appropriation draws nigh, up from the San Saba country rides Lonny Briscoe and a loyal lobby of cowpunchers, broncho-back, to boost the cause of art and glorify the name of friendship, for Lonny is one of them, a knight of stirrup and chapareras, as handy with the lariat and .45 as he is

with brush and palette.

On a March afternoon the lobby dashed, with a whoop, into town, The cowpunchers had adjusted their garb suitably from that prescribed for the range to the more conventional requirements of town. They had conceded their leather chapareras and transferred their six-shooters and belts from their persons to the horns of their saddles. Among them rode Lonny, a youth of twenty-three, brown, solemn-faced, ingenuous, bow-legged, reticent, bestriding Hot Tamales, the most sagacious cow pony west of the Mississippi. Senator Mullens had informed him of the bright prospects of the situation; had even mentioned-so great was his confidence in the capable Kinney—the price that the State would, in all likelihood, pay. It seemed to Lonny that fame and fortune were in his hands. Certainly, a spark of the divine fire was in the little brown centaur's breast, for he was counting the two thousand dollars as but a means to future development of his talent. Some day he would paint a picture even greater than this-one, say, twelve feet by twenty, full of scope and atmosphere and action.

During the three days that yet intervened before the coming of the date fixed for the introduction of the bill, the

centaur lobby did valiant service. Coatless, spurred, weather-tanned, full of enthusiasm expressed in bizarre terms, they loafed in front of the painting with tireless zeal. Reasoning not unshrewdly, they estimated that their comments upon its fidelity to nature would be received as expert evidence. Loudly they praised the skill of the painter whenever there were ears near to which such evidence might be profitably addressed. Lem Perry, the leader of the claque, had a somewhat set speech, being uninventive in the construction of new phrases.

"Look at the two-year-old now," he would say, waving a cinnamon-brown hand toward the salient point of the picture. "Why, dang my hide, the critter's alive. I can jest hear him, lumpety-lump, a-cuttin' away from the herd, pretendin' he's skeered. He's a mean scamp, that there steer. Look at his eyes a-wallin' and his tail a-wavin'. He's true and nat'ral to life. He's jest hankerin' fur a cow pony to round him up and send him scootin' back to the bunch. Dang my hide! Jest look at that tail of his'n a-wavin'. Never knowed a steer to wave his tail any other way, dang my hide ef I did."

Jud Shelby, while admitting the excellence of the steer, resolutely confined himself to open admiration of the landscape, to the end that the entire picture

receive its meed of praise.

"That piece of range," he declared, "is a dead ringer for Dead Hoss Valley. Same grass, same lay of the land, same old Whipperwill Creek skallyhootin' in and out of them motts of timber. Them buzzards on the left is circlin' round over Sam Kildrake's old paint hoss that killed hisself overdrinkin' on a hot day. You can't see the hoss for that mott of ellums on the creek, but he's thar. Anybody that was goin' to look for Dead Hoss Valley and come across this picture, why, he'd jest light off'n his broncho and hunt a place to camp."

"Skinny" Rogers, wedded to comedy, conceived a complimentary little piece of acting that never failed to make an impression. Edging quite near to the picture, he would suddenly, at favorable moments, emit a piercing and awful "Yi-yi!" leap high and away, coming down with a great stamp of heels and whirring of rowels upon the stone-flagged floor.

"Jeeming Christopher!"—so ran his lines—"thought that rattler was a ginuine one. Ding baste my skin if I didn't. Seemed to me I heard him rattle. Look at the blamed, unconverted insect a-layin' under that pear. Little more, and somebody would 'a' been snake-bit."

With these artful dodges, contributed by Lonny's faithful coterie, with the sonorous Kinney perpetually sounding the picture's merits, and with the solvent prestige of the pioneer Briscoe covering it like a precious varnish, it seemed that the San Saba country could not fail to add a reputation as an art center to its well-known superiority in steer-roping contests and achievements with the precarious busted flush. Thus was created for the picture an atmosphere, due rather to externals than to artist's brush, but through it the people seemed to gaze with more of admiration. There was a magic in the name of Briscoe that counted high against faulty technique and crude coloring. The old Indian fighter and wolf slayer would have smiled grimly in his happy hunting grounds had he known that his dilettante ghost was thus figuring as an art patron two generations after his uninspired existence.

Came the day when the senate was expected to pass the bill of Senator Mullens appropriating two thousand dollars for the purchase of the picture. The gallery of the senate chamber was early preëmpted by Lonny and the San Saba lobby. In the front row of chairs they sat, wild-haired, self-conscious, jingling,

creaking and rattling, subdued by the majesty of the council hall.

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The bill was introduced, went to the second reading, and then Senator Mullens spoke for it dryly, tediously, and at length. Senator Kinney then arose, and the welkin seized the bellrope preparatory to ringing. Oratory was at that time a living thing; the world had not quite come to measure its questions by geometry and the multiplication table. It was the day of the silver tongue, the sweeping gesture, the decorative apostrophe, the moving peroration.

The senator spoke. The San Saba contingent sat, breathing hard, in the gallery, its disordered hair hanging down to its eyes, its sixteen-ounce hats shifted restlessly from knee to knee. Below, the distinguished senators either lounged at their desks with the abandon of proven statesmanship or maintained correct attitudes indicative of a first term.

Senator Kinney spoke for half an hour. History was his theme-history mitigated by patriotism and sentiment. He referred casually to the picture in the outer hall-it was unnecessary, he said, to dilate upon its merits—the senators had seen for themselves. painter of the picture was the grandson of Lucien Briscoe. Then came the word pictures of Briscoe's life set forth in thrilling colors. His rude and venturesome life, his simple-minded love for the commonwealth he helped to upbuild. his contempt for rewards and praise, his extreme and sturdy independence, and the great services he had rendered the State. The subject of the oration was Lucien Briscoe; the painting stood in the background, serving simply as a means, now happily brought forward, through which the State might bestow a tardy recompense upon the descendant of its favorite son. Frequent enthusiastic applause from the senators testified to the well reception of the sentiThe bill passed without an opposing vote. To-morrow it would be taken up by the house. Already was it fixed to glide through that body on rubber tires. Blandford, Grayson, and Plummer, all wheel horses and orators, and provided with plentiful memoranda concerning the deeds of Pioneer Briscoe, had agreed to furnish the necessary motive power.

The San Saba lobby and its protégé stumbled awkwardly down the stairs and out into the capitol yard. Then they herded closely and gave one yell of triumph. But one of them—"Buck-kneed" Summers it was—hit the key with a

thoughtful remark.

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"She cut the mustard," he said, "all right. I reckon they're goin' to buy Lon's heifer. I ain't right much on the parlyment'ry, but I gather that's what the signs added up. But she seems to me, Lonny, the argyment ran principal to grandfather, instead of paint. It's reasonable calculatin' that you want to be glad you got the Briscoe brand on you, my son."

That remark clinched in Lonny's mind an unpleasant, vague suspicion to the same effect. His reticence increased, and he gathered grass from the ground, chewing it pensively. The picture as a picture had been humiliatingly absent from the senator's arguments. The painter had been held up as a grandson, pure and simple. While this was gratifying on certain lines it made art look little and slab-sided. The boy artist

was thinking.

The hotel Lonny stopped at was near the capitol. It was close to the oneo'clock dinner hour when the appropriation had been passed by the senate. The hotel clerk told Lonny that a famous artist from New York had arrived in town that day and was in the hotel. He was on his way westward to New Mexico to study the effect of sunlight upon the ancient walls of the Zuñis, Modern stone reflects light. Those an-

cient building materials absorb it. The artist wanted this effect in a picture he was painting and was traveling three

thousand miles to get it.

Lonny sought this man out after dinner and told his story. The artist was an unhealthy man, kept alive by genius and indifference to life. He went with Lonny to the capitol and stood there before the picture. The artist pulled his beard and looked unhappy.

"Should like to have your sentiments," said Lonny, "just as they run

out of the pen."

"It's the way they'll come," said the painter man. "I took three different kinds of medicine before dinner—by the tablespoonful. The taste still lingers. I am primed for telling the truth. You want to know if the picture is, or if it isn't?"

"Right!" said Lonny. "Is it wool or cotton? Should I paint some more or cut it out and ride her a-plenty?"

"I heard a rumor during pie," said the artist, "that the State is about to pay you two thousand dollars for this picture."

"It's passed the senate," said Lonny, "and the house rounds it up to-morrow."

"That's lucky," said the pale man.

"Do you carry a rabbit's foot?"

"No," said Lonny, "but it seems I had a grandfather. He's considerable mixed up in the color scheme. It took me a year to paint that picture. Is she entirely awful or not? Some says, now, that that steer's tail ain't badly drawed. They think it's proportioned nice. Tell me."

The artist glanced at Lonny's wiry figure and nut-brown skin. Something stirred him to a passing irritation.

"For art's sake, son," he said fractiously, "don't spend any more money for paint. It isn't a picture at all. It's a gun. You hold up the State with it, if you like, and get your two thousand, but don't get in front of any more canvas. Live under it. Buy a couple of

hundred ponies with the money—I'm told they're that cheap—and ride, ride, ride. Fill your lungs and eat and sleep and be happy. No more pictures. You look healthy. That's genius. Cultivate it." He looked at his watch. "Twenty minutes to three. Four capsules and one tablet at three. That's all you wanted to know, isn't it?"

At three o'clock the cow-punchers rode up for Lonny, bringing Hot Tamales, saddled. Traditions must be observed. To celebrate the passage of the bill by the senate the gang must ride wildly through the town, creating uproar and excitement. Liquor must be partaken of, the suburbs shot up and the glory of the San Saba country vociferously proclaimed. A part of the program had been carried out in the saloons on the way up.

Lonny mounted Hot Tamales, the accomplished little beast prancing with fire and intelligence. He was glad to feel Lonny's bowlegged grip against his ribs again. Lonny was his friend, and he was willing to do things for him.

"Come on, boys," said Lonny, guiding Hot Tamales into a gallop with his knees. With a whoop, the inspired lobby tore after him through the dust. Lonny led his cohorts straight for the capitol. With a yild yell, the gang indorsed his now evident intention of riding into it. Hooray for San Saba!

Up the four broad, limestone steps clattered the bronchos of the cow-punchers. Into the resounding hallway they pattered, scattering in dismay those passing on foot. Lonny, in the lead, shoved Hot Tamales direct for the great picture. At that hour a downpouring, soft light from the second-story windows bathed the big canvas. Against the darker background of the hall the painting stood out with valuable effect. In spite of the defects of the art you could almost fancy that you gazed out upon a landscape. You might well flinch a step from the convincing figure of the life-sized steer stampeding across the grass. Perhaps it thus seemed to Hot Tamales. The scene was in his line. Perhaps he only obeyed the will of his rider. His ears pricked up; he snorted. Lonny leaned forward in the saddle and elevated his elbows, winglike. Thus signals the cow-puncher to his steed to launch himself full speed ahead.

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Did Hot Tamales fancy he saw a steer, red and cavorting, that should be headed off and driven back to herd? There was a fierce clatter of hoofs, a rush, a gathering of steely flank muscles, a leap to the jerk of the bridle rein, and Hot Tamales, with Lonny bending low in the saddle to dodge the top of the frame, ripped through the great canvas like a shell from a mortar, leaving the cloth hanging in ragged shreds about a monstrous hole.

Quickly Lonny pulled up his pony, and rounded the pillars. Spectators came running, too astounded to add speech to the commotion. The sergeant at arms of the house came forth, frowned, looked ominous, and then grinned. Many of the legislators crowded out to observe the tumult. Lonny's cow-punchers were stricken to silent horror by his mad deed.

Senator Kinney happened to be among the earliest to emerge. Before he could speak, Lonny leaned in his saddle as Hot Tamales pranced, pointed his quirt at the senator, and said calmly:

"That was a fine speech you made to-day, mister, but you might as well let up on that 'propriation business. I ain't askin' the State give me nothin'. I thought I had a picture to sell to it, but it wasn't one. You said a heap of things about Grandfather Briscoe that makes me kind of proud I'm his grandson. Well, the Briscoes ain't takin' presents from the State yet. Anybody can have the frame that wants it. Hit her up, boys."

Away scuttled the San Saba delega-

tion out of the hall, down the steps, along the dusty street.

Halfway to the San Saba countrythey camped that night. At bedtime Lonny stole away from the camp fire and sought Hot Tamales, placidly eating grass at the end of his stake rope.

Lonny hung upon his neck, and his art aspirations went forth forever in one long, regretful sigh. But as he thus made renunciation he whispered:

"You was the only one, Tamales, what seen anything in it. It did look like a steer, didn't it, old hoss?"



IF

OH, if the world were mine, love, I'd give the world for thee!

Alas! There is no sign, love,
Of that contingency!

Were I a king—which isn't
To be considered now—
A diadem had glistened
Upon that lovely brow.

Had fame with laurels crowned me—
She hasn't, up to date—
Nor time nor change had found me
To love and thee ingrate.

If Death threw down his gauge, love,
Though life is dear to me,
I'd die, e'en of old age, love,
To win a smile from thee.

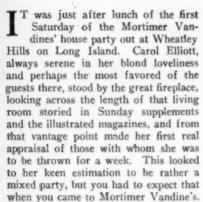
But being poor, we part, dear,
And love, sweet love, must die;
Thou wilt not break thy heart, dear;
No more, I think, shall I!
JAMES JEFFREY ROCHE.

Reverse English

By Warren E. Schutt

Author of "When He Bowed," "The Long, Long Arm," etc.

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For he, however worth while, had married Marcia rather above his own social position, and was very much the pusher, very much inclined to use for his business advancement what social prestige Marcia gave him. And Marcia, lovable as she was, out of the sheer kindness of her heart and a too-wide acquaintance, was rather prone to be let in for things not always agreeable. But, in spite of these facts, Carol always came to them, for she knew that Marcia needed her a little on such occasions.

As she stood there now surveying the guests, a servant stopped beside her.

"A telephone call from New York for you, Miss Elliott," he announced. "Who is it?"

"A man who would give no name. Shall I dismiss him, or have the call switched to your room, or—"

Carol, as intimate as the owners themselves with the plan of this great, rambling Georgian house, knew there were telephone booths installed under the farther reaches of the stairway; and, not overly intrigued by this anonymous call, signified her intention of answering it from the hall. She was amazed, however, to hear from the other end of the wire, the leonine rumble of old Petrus Brent's voice—a voice which she had heard, whether to love or to fear, since she could differentiate voices.

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"Carol!" he exclaimed. "By Jupiter, but this is a relief!"

She thought at first that he was in a not-unusual mood of banter with her, and she therefore laughed back at him.

"I must say that you sound as if it was such a relief as has not been since Lucknow. I think I've never heard a man so relieved as you seem to be. What——"

He broke brusquely in upon her banter; still, his brusqueness might not mean anything, for Petrus Brent's tongue was hard steel to every one.

"Relief to get hold of you, Carol! I guessed you were out there. I wanted you, because I don't trust anybody else. Tell me, has that rapscallion son of mine shown up there yet?"

"Son?" she repeated. "You mean Nicky?"

"Yes, I mean Nicholas. Haven't any other son, so far as I know."

"But he's in Europe—"

"Got back this morning. . Just like him, mad head he is, never to let us know he was coming, never even to take the trouble to see us. I didn't happen to be in the office when he called. He left a note saying he had arrived, and was going out to Vandine's for the week-end at least, and would see mesome time. Get that, Carol? 'Some time!" He quoted his son with such a snort as only the irascible old Petrus Brent could educe. "And you know what he went abroad for. Mad head that he is! Scatterbrain! Carol, I love him, but-but you know what he went abroad for."

To Carol Elliott, all that he said was illuminating comment on Nicholas Brent, that blithe and gay inimitable, who had been expelled from three universities for the very madness of his innocuous pranks, and who, since then, had been the respected and beloved jester of every house party that could induce him to be present. At least, all that was true until the preceding year, when his father got caught in a mill of upstart financial interests which sought by swaving blows to destroy him, and would have succeeded but that Petrus Brent's signature, without security, was in such a crisis temporarily worth anything he needed to get on it. Then, indeed, Nicky Brent ceased his clowning, and stood shoulder to shoulder with his father; and fought for him throughout that long year, in front of him in the counteroffensive, behind him on the defense.

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It was during that period, when stress brought out in him those hitherto-unguessed qualities of his, that Carol Elliott first came to love Nicky Brent. Till then, she had loved him as all his friends had loved him—a bit more intimately, perhaps, for they had been thrown together since perambulator days. And though during the period of that fight Carol had admired him from afar, and in closer intimacy given him strength such as only a woman can give the man

she loves, nevertheless he had never seemed to realize that she did love him. No word of love for her had passed his lips: no sign in his eyes had eyer told her that he looked upon her as more than a close friend. It was not easy for her. Yet he seemed then to need her. And out of her high respect for Petrus Brent, out of her sincere hope for the complete restoration of the Brent prestige-for more than fortune was at stake-most of all out of her realization that Nicky Brent needed her, she had given him of her ardent spirit without stint and without calculation of the cost.

Yet, until this moment, she had never regretted her generosity, never lost her pride in the man she had thus helped to make. Prouder than ever had she been of him when his father chose him, in preference to any other of his more expert associates, to make an arduous trip to Europe in the Brent behalf, to win over a long and scattered list of European stockholders in the N. W. & C., and line them up against the merger interests which his father was fighting.

Yet here was Nicky Brent back again! Back six weeks before the time allotted as the least in which he could accomplish his mission. Back, and plunging indecently into the first gayety that offered, without so much as granting an interview to his father, who must be on a torture rack. Back six weeks too early, and dodging his father! What could that mean but failure? What but the completest reversion to the old carefree, mercurial Nicky?

All this passed in an instant through Carol's mind as she replied to Petrus Brent's inquiry.

"Yes," she said, "I know why he went abroad. He told me. I have kept the confidence."

"You don't have to tell me that you've kept a confidence, Carol. I've known you too long. Damned rascal that he is —if only you and he would tie up—and

I do love him, Carol. But what I wanted to call you for—point is, I understand there's a woman out there at Vandine's—one he met in England. I got this by cablegram from Harcourt, Hodges & Co., my agents in London, and she's—she's—well, queer. He'd better lay off her. But, Carol, you know I couldn't tell him that, or I'd throw him directly at her. You know Nicky."

"What do you mean by 'queer?' " she

asked him,

"I don't know what I mean. I'll quote you exactly what Harcourt, Hodges cabled, and you can draw your own conclusions:

"Are informed your son left unexpectedly for New York following Christine Palmer at Vandine's, Long Island. Palmer woman very intimate with Joel Barnardo. Fear trouble and advise you to look out.

"There, Carol, what do you make of that?"

"Who," she asked instantly, "is Joel Barnardo?"

"Private banker in London. Don't know anything else about him. Assume from cablegram that Nicky does know; perhaps that he is a rival. But, anyway, Carol, you see I can't do anything, except beg you—yes, beg you—to keep Nicky away from her. She's dangerous, or they wouldn't have taken the trouble to cable me about it. You say Nicky hasn't got there yet?"

"No! I hadn't the faintest idea he was coming until you called. He must be coming out with Mortimer."

"Yes, that's it. His harebrained note told me that. Please do what you can, Carol. I'll keep in touch with you. I'll come out there myself and take charge of things if it comes to a show-down. But I must depend first on you to keep Nicholas from making a fool of himself. Carol, I can depend on you, can I not?"

"I'll see what I can do," she replied.
"Though it's—well, most unusual. She's

a guest here, as I am, and Marcia Vandine—— Oh, never mind all that. I'll do what I can."

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For she suddenly realized that old Petrus Brent was too worried over his own affairs to be bothered with such amenities as hold between house guest and hostess.

"And tell that son of mine to call me up right away when he gets there; only tell him to be mighty careful what he says over the phone. Will you do that, Carol?"

"Yes," she promised readily, and resolutely. "I can make him do that, at least, if I have to lead him into the telephone booth and dictate what he shall say."

With renewed expressions of gratitude toward her, Petrus Brent rang off.

Carol thoughtfully made her way back into the living room, and again she surveyed it—this room of heroic size, the precise reconstruction of the refectory of a French monastery, a full seventy feet in length, vaulted under heavy, oaken timbers, with wroughtiron chandeliers dependent from the beams to light it at night with a thousand tiny bulbs, and sconces of equally fine-wrought work between the paintings on the wall.

This time she searched the twenty-odd laughing, chattering guests with more definite purpose than appraisal. This time she looked for Christine Palmer. At a time-blackened refectory table stretching down the nearer end of the center of the room, a group was playing at roulette, but playing only half-heartedly. Mrs. Palmer, as she remembered her, was not of these. Farther down the room, the rugs had been thrown back, and a few couples were dancing to the music of an electric phonograph. But no Mrs. Palmer in sight!

Marcia Vandine, placid and unruffled and perhaps a little buxom, came past her into the room, and stopped with her

for a moment. It was on the tip of Carol's tongue to ask whether she knew of Nicky Brent's coming. Then she guessed that Mortimer Vandine must have desired to keep it as a surprise, since he assumably had not yet told Marcia. If Marcia had known it, she would have told Carol before this; for Marcia, alone of all her friends, guessed within a little that Carol loved Nicky Brent. Carol realized, too, that it would he hard to explain how she came to be elected to have the news before her hostess, unless she betrayed Petrus Hence she said Brent's confidence, nothing about Nicky's coming.

"Looking for some one?" Marcia asked her, in her deep, musical voice.

"Only incidentally," Carol returned. "Mrs. Palmer. She rather interests me. Where did you pick her up?"

"Oh, Christine Palmer?" Marcia scanned the room from her greater height than Carol's. "She's on the sofa in front of the other fireplace, alone. You can just see the top of her black head. She is interesting, isn't she? Rather a catch, I think, if she wouldn't keep herself so aloof. Alone most of the time."

Carol smiled at Marcia.

"And with your charming garrulity, my dear, you've missed my main point -perhaps purposely. Where did you

pick her up?"

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"Perhaps a little bit on purpose. It was a little unusual. She came to me last Wednesday-or was it Thursday? -straight from the steamer she's crossed on. Queer way to do things, it seemed to me at the time, but once I saw her, I liked her. Then, too, she had letters from the Baroness Cleve, who was so splendid to me in Nice two years ago, and in London that spring; and from Mrs. Stilson Craig. Craig's by way of being Mortimer's correspondent in London, and for that reason I had to be nice to her. So I simply put her up here. What else could I do,

with this party coming on? She here, I alone, for the first time in America, In couldn't send her back to New York, and a hotel there. I've not been sorry for it, though it is just one of my im-29 pulses."

"Of course you couldn't do anything else," Carol said quickly, and with sincerity, too, since she knew how softhearted Marcia was. She couldn't, not for anything, hurt Marcia even by casu-

istic censure.

At that very moment, Mortimer Vandine burst in from his drive from New York, and with his loud geniality announced himself and the man behind

"You see before you, ladies and gentlemen, a magician of the first order, who summons Europe to do his bidding and deliver up to us our best-beloved-"

What else he had to say was drowned out by the chorus of cries that greeted the newcomer:

"Nicky." "Nicky Brent!" "Playboy of the Western World." "Playboy of the whole darn universe!" "Nicky, when did you get back, and why?"

And so on until Nicky himself an-

swered them.

Carol, looking eagerly for some sign from him, though he had not yet seen her, heard Marcia Vandine, beside her, whisper with delight:

"Here's luck for you, Carol, my dear. I ask Mortimer to bring out some man to fill in for Chris Pomeroy, and look what the man brings. That husband of mine is really-he really is-" And she went forward to greet the new

guest.

Carol followed after her, a little slowly. She knew from his voice and his bearing, with that instant sympathy she had for him, that this Nicholas Brent was very far from being the playboy they had dubbed him from their enthusiastic memories. He was a Nicky very different from any she had known, even in his most serious moments. Grim, restrained, almost like a quarry at bay, in spite of his apparent and superficial efforts to rise to the occasion! His was not the voice of a man returned from Europe after a successful trip; even further from the voice of a beloved harlequin. He stood in the center of the group, towering above most of them, with a ready hand and a quick smile; but his eyes and his thoughts were of other things. He was looking this crowd over, searching-

Then his eyes fell on Mrs. Palmer, who had arisen from her solitary seat by the fire, and stood undecided whether to come forward or not. Carol saw instant recognition in Nicky's first glance toward the other woman. He greeted her from that distance with a wave of the hand.

"Well, who'd have thought-Marcia Vandine, how in the world did you

manage this-Mrs. Palmer?"

Mrs. Palmer had made herself one of the group now, and their more intimate greetings were lost to Carol, who gathered only what she already knew-that these two had known one another in

England.

Carol came up now, and stood by until at last he saw her. He clasped her hand in his boyish fashion, but in his eyes there was a mute, almost resolute repelling of her. Translated into words, his eyes had plainly told her: "I am as sorry as anything to see you here."

What he said was:

"Carol, you, too! Marcia, you did fix up a lovely party for me to come home to."

Then, almost too suddenly, as if he were intolerably embarrassed at the situation, he shook them all off rather grimly, and asked to go to his room.

Carol waited in the living room, from which most of the guests had now disappeared in favor of outdoors, until Mcky had lunched. But when he came out from the dining room, Christine Palmer had materialized from nowhere. to come up to them just as Carol was speaking with Brent. And with an audacity that would have been incredible, insupportable in any one else, she cut in with:

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"Mr. Brent, you must tell me at once how you happen to be here. I thought you were in England for six weeks vet. And fancy your knowing the Vandines! Inimitable people, aren't they? Come now and tell me all about it. You will excuse him, won't you?" she said to Carol. But without waiting for the answer which she knew she would not get. she drew Nicky after her toward the exit from the house. That was the last Carol saw of either of them until eve-

During the afternoon she managed to draw from Marcia Vandine something more of the Palmer woman whom, un to this time, she had scarcely noticed, Marcia, not knowing the contretemps that had come up, was still enthusiastic

about her chance guest.

"Smart! Marvelous gowns! Golf and bridge and tennis of the best. Knows everybody on the Continent worth knowing, you gather, with what seems to be mostly diplomatic back-Divorced, I imagine, but ground. rather shadowy about it. After all, Carol, she's really rather shadowy about everything. That is, everything seems clear enough when you are with her, but after she's gone, and you stop to think, then it seems rather cloudy-if you know what I mean. She's one of these indescribable women you have to put on a borderland, though whether it's a borderland behind you, or a borderland ahead of you, you can't be sure."

Marcia seemed unusually gifted with her summing-up. Mrs. Palmer had certainly made an impression on her. Carol thought it over, while Marcia chat-

tered on:

"Queer about Nicky's knowing her.

I'm anxious as anything to pump him. He's off with her now, by the way, isn't he? Queer, too, about his coming out here. Mortimer told me that he ran into his office this morning straight from the ship, said he heard she was out here, and asked to be invited out. You can imagine Mortimer's refusing! He thinks it's a personal triumph to get him out here. Nicky's changed, though, hasn't he, some way?"

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Much more of Marcia's harmless

Carol did not see Nicky Brent again until they met for a moment at the top of the stairs, she going up to dress, he coming down for a cocktail with the men. He would have passed her by with but the most meaningless of exchanges, if she had not stopped him.

"Nicky, I must know. Have you telephoned your father?"

"Funny thing for you to ask! No, I haven't."

"Oh, Nicky! He called me by telephone; asked me-"

"Called—you? Well, I'll telephone him right away," Brent promised, and would have gone on again.

Again she stopped him.

"Am I not to see anything of you while you are here?" she asked with a swift smile. "Or does Mrs. Palmer so completely engage you that you've forgotten all your friends?"

He looked at her rather sternly.

"Carol, I must say frankly, you are the last person I expected to see here, or thought of seeing."

She laughed, as any woman would do, under the circumstances.

"I must confess that you don't appear to be awfully pleased about it."

"Sorry! It isn't that. It's—no, I'm frankly not pleased. But that's nothing against you. You—wouldn't understand."

Carol found the most radical change in the man. The Nicky Brent of old could never, at any cost, have unburdened himself of such a speech as that to a woman, no matter what the truth. When Carol sought to read the riddle that lay behind it, she found in his eyes a blank wall which she could not penetrate. The blithe, exuberant "playboy" had become a man of strength, of at least a somber defiance. Under other circumstances she could have wished for nothing better in him; but now that it repelled her, balked her in her endeavor, she hated it.

"Nicky, I must ask you again, do you know what you are doing?"

"What? Oh, you mean Mrs. Palmer?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I know very well what I am doing."

"I wonder if you do."

"What makes you think I don't?"
"You are changed incredibly."

"I must go and telephone father," he said, as if he welcomed the pretext.

"And he wanted me to tell you to be very careful what you said over the telephone. Mortimer always has a mixed party here, you know."

"I'll be cautious enough."

"And when am I to hear something about your trip?" she asked, trying her best to hold him, though her pride rebelled against such tactics.

"Some time—soon, I guess," he said rather dourly; and this time continued his way downstairs without further in-

terruption from her.

And so it bade fair to be not an easy campaign that she had taken upon her shoulders. It was quite possible that she might have to call old Petrus Brent in upon it after all, though she did rebel against that on Marcia Vandine's account. Marcia would never forget the wound if one of her guests turned out to be less than she should be; and Petrus Brent was not one to mince matters with man or woman. Petrus Brent's arrival would make a scene, an unforgetable scene, one in which Marcia

most of all, and Nicky Brent at least a little, would suffer cruelly. Moreover, Petrus Brent would be far more likely to drive his headstrong son to disaster—if, indeed, disaster were imminent—than to save him from it.

She contemplated for a moment asking Marcia to put her next to Nicky for dinner that night, but abandoned the idea as being one too obvious of intent, and a little too costly to her pride, even before Marcia. She did, however, watch things throughout the dinner, which was a loud and overvinous affair. She herself sat at Mortimer Vandine's right, but his boisterous platitudes hadn't stuff enough in them to keep her occupied to the exclusion of an unobtrusive inspection of the table's rowdy length.

Christine Palmer-Carol wondered whether it was an arrangement wheedled out of Marcia, or whether Marcia had arranged it out of deference to the Palmer woman's obvious preference-sat next to Nicky, well over halfway down the table. With some peculiar enchantment, or some feminine mastery of the situation, she had managed to shut the two of them in, apart from all the rest of the noisy revelers. She had a way of gesturing, though unobtrusively, her round, chalk-white arms and lovely hands close to him. often, and with too much audacity, did she meet his glances, and return them with an assumption of intimacy which Nicky, of a reserve unusual for him, plainly found embarrassing. Occasionally, as Brent's eyes wandered away from her and around the table, there came into his forehead an anxious furrowing of vertical lines, and his lips tightened to a straight slit above his square chin. What they talked aboutand their conversation was continual and a deux-was a matter of conjecture only.

On the next night while her maid, hurrying against time lest Carol be late for dinner, was restoring to dinner decorum the blond masses of her hair, which a too-late round of golf in a windy September drizzle had visited with healthy confusion, there came at Carol's door a determined, a mandatory knock. The maid, with deft hands suddenly poised, awaited her mistress' command.

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"See who it is, but let no one in," Carol said. "It is late already. I have no time."

The maid came back with the announcement:

"It is Mrs. Palmer to see you, miss, and she says it is most important to have five minutes with you before dinner."

The maid—not Carol's own, but one of the housemaids—had hitherto been most efficient in obeying her orders. Carol, perhaps too sensitive about the Brent-Palmer affair, thought she detected in this first slight breach of discipline some hint of backstairs gossip, some slightly audacious reminder that Carol could scarcely refuse to see Mrs. Palmer. Or possibly, even, the maid had been suborned secretly to convey the message.

Be that as it might, Carol knew she could not put Mrs. Palmer off.

"Let her come in," she said in an even voice, "and go on with my hair as quickly as you can."

So Mrs. Palmer came to her—a woman who, at such close range, was apparently not more than twenty-five years in age, though Heaven knew how many years in experience; small and very fine of figure; brunette, of soft perfection of olive skin to the point of belying Saxon ancestry and suggesting Latin forbears; gowned for dinner now in some midnight blue with sheen of silver and rhinestones, and decollete without reserve.

Carol, still seated before the magnificent French mirror that was a part of her dressing table, greeted Mrs. Palmer with a smile, naturally, but made no

other change of poise.

"You will excuse me," she told her visitor. "I shall be late unless I go on with my dressing. Can you find cigarettes? Bertha, give Mrs. Palmer the cigarettes. And there are dividends left in the shaker, if you care for another sip of a cocktail. We can talk, can we not, while Bertha finishes with me?"

"Thanks! I'll not smoke again before dinner. Could we talk for a moment alone?" Mrs. Palmer was plainly nervous, But whether the nervousness was engendered in her errand, or in

facing Carol, was not clear.

"We are alone, are we not?" Carol returned placidly. "Oh, except for Bertha, of course. But without her I shall be late for dinner. You may talk as much as you please. I'll listen

eagerly."

"It's about Nicky Brent that I have come to you," Mrs. Palmer returned, as with a warning; even as with a certainty that Carol would change her mind when she knew with what the visit was concerned.

"Oh, yes, about Nicky," Carol repeated placidly. "I shall be interested in anything you have to say about him. We have been friends for a very long time, Nicky and I. Probably he has

told you so."

"No, but I guessed it. In fact, I'm inclined to guess rather more than that." As Mrs. Palmer delivered herself of that speech, she seated herself on the couch across the foot of the great damask-canopied French bed with its carved posts, so that Carol could see her perfectly in the mirror of the dressing table without, she gathered, herself being seen. Mrs. Palmer had taken a cigarette in spite of her refusal, and was puffing it with unusual energy, and glaring with close scrutiny at Carol.

"Oh, yes?" Carol prompted her. "What may that mean—'more than

that?"

"I know, at least, that you are an enemy of mine."

"What in the world has suggested to you that I am your enemy?"

"From the way you look at me. I have something above juvenile sagacity, at least. I have lived in the world, and

not out of it."

"Would you mind coming rather quickly to the point?" Carol asked her

civilly.

"Not if you would as soon the maid

heard what I have to say."

Carol took quick stock of the situation. It was clear that Mrs. Palmer considered her as something of a dangerous rival. As well, perhaps, to know what the affair was about, if perchance she were able to help Nicky Brent.

"Will you step out for a moment,

Bertha?" she asked the maid.

When they were alone, Mrs. Palmer came over close to her on her dressing stool.

"I know quite well," she said, speaking with passion, now, and a sort of ruthless celerity, "that you fear, for whatever reason, that I am going to bring trouble on Nicky Brent. I have watched you; I heard what you said to him at the top of the stairs last night. And I know, too, that he fears your interest in the matter. I want to tell you, and prove to you, that I am doing whatever I am doing only for his own good. Perhaps, if you realize that, you will leave me alone with him, and not be spying around on us."

"Sorry, but I'm not aware that I have

been spying."

"Be that as it may, and I reserve my right to consider it as I want to, it is none the less true that you act as a tremendously restraining influence on him."

Carol found it difficult to believe what she had heard. Either Mrs. Palmer was not of the breeding she gave outward manifestation of being, or else almost equally incredible—she was so madly in love with Nicky Brent that she had lost all sense of pride. At the same time. Carol found it pleasant hearing, however incredible, that she herself was enough in Nicky Brent's mind to influence him with other women. She made placid answer:

"One would almost think that you want me to destroy this influence, which exists, if at all, in your own mind."

"Precisely what I want you to do."

was Mrs. Palmer's answer.

More and more incredible! So much so that Carol was forced to meet the woman's eyes in close scrutiny, only to corroborate her ears' evidence that she was in deadly earnest.

"Strange appeal!" Carol said, sin-

cerely enough.

"Do you think so? Listen, then. I know you love Nicky Brent, but he doesn't love you. If he hasn't come to love you all these years you have known him, can't you see that it is a fruitless love for you?"

"All this is my own affair, if you

don't mind."

"Partly mine. For I do love him, and I know that he loves me. know it, too. You have seen it. he not follow me here from England as soon as he knew I had come here? Did he not leave half his work there undone because he couldn't stay away from me?"

Much of which, Carol feared, was

the truth-probably all of it.

"Well?" she queried, as the other stopped for want of breath in her im-

passioned state.

"Let me tell you next why I came here to America. I am sure that you will keep it a confidence. I have no desire to hurt Marcia Vandine, who has been more than splendid to me. She was the sole entrée I had here, and I had to use it, for my purpose. Can we not keep her out of it?"

"We must, if I have anything to do

about it."

"Then, to tell you as briefly as possible I must go back a little to make you understand. I am a sister of Lady Summerton-you know her."

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Carol recalled that Lady Summerton had been a well-known musical comedy star of American parentage, rather notorious not so many years before under the name of Elaine Terrill, until a fledgling peer had given her his title to

"I have heard of her." Carol said.

"I suspect you didn't know that Petrus Brent made her? And then when he got tired of her, he started her in England to get rid of her."

Carol's breath stopped for a moment. Impossible of belief, was her first reaction to the information, for always she had considered Petrus Brent's conjugal life to be the one she knew above reproach. Still, men sometimes- No. no. Petrus Brent's life was absolutely crystal clear.

"Well?" she repeated herself, betraying nothing of what she thought.

"My sister gave me all the letters he ever wrote her, and they are-you can imagine what they are. I need money terribly. I have just divorced an impossible rotter from whom I could not get a penny, and whom I could not endure. Oh, I have lived, I tell you. Still, that brings me down to the reason for my being in America. Joel Barnardohave you heard of him?"

Carol never had heard of him save through Petrus Brent's telephone message to her the day before.

"Yes, I have heard of him."

"He is giving me ten thousand pounds to force Petrus Brent to drop his fight against the merger. know, as well as I, that Brent will do anything to keep his wife from the torture of such publicity."

Carol knew that in all reality. Petrus Brent adored his gentle, white-haired wife. Iron-willed as he was, he was very likely to accept defeat at his time of life, rather than risk scandal to his reputation as a husband.

"Tell me," Carol returned, "does Nicholas know all this?"

"No. Not a word of it. He doesn't suspect it, even."

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"He seems to have been very fortunate in knowing you rather well in England," Carol said with a pregnant mean-

"I admit that. I have done things for Joel Barnardo. But I needed the money. I have deliberately tried to divert him from success in his mission abroad, and have succeeded. But succeeded to the point of loving the man. You know I love him. I couldn't come to you like this if I did not. Now I regret what I have done, and want to make him atonement. And I want to marry him. Why should I not marry him? I am of as good standing as he, with my sister Lady Summerton and all; I am divorced, to be sure, but what is that?"

"One would almost think you have come to me with some sort of bargain."

"I have. Petrus Brent can still win his fight, and bring his son out of it with flying colors, if I do not use these letters. But so long as you are here, in this house, continually spying, continually standing over Nicky Brent like some defiant and avenging deity, I can never win Nicky Brent. And I must have him. I must know he is mine. Financially I have to. If I play traitor to Joel Barnardo, I must have something else to rely on. Before I dare give up one thing, I must have another."

"I suspect so."

"And I know that Nicky Brent loves me—almost enough to ask me to marry him. I know that it is only you who restrain him. If you were not here, he would let himself go with me. I have faith enough in myself to know that, if you were not here, Nicky would ask me to marry him before the week is out."

"I begin to see a little, at least, where you are coming to," Carol said.

"I suspect you do. I will give you the letters as a guarantee that I have broken with Joel Barnardo. That means that Nicky is completely exonerated of having become infatuated with me in England, with the consequent loss to his father's business. It amounts to a guarantee that Petrus Brent will win his fight in the stockholders' meeting next month. In return for that, I want you to leave this place immediately, tonight, stay away from me and from Nicky, and give me completely a free hand with him."

"An amazing offer!"

"Why amazing? I am desperate. I am sick of the life I lead, and want to change it for the better. I love Nicky Brent as I could never love another man. I want to wash my slate clean. Why is it an amazing offer? Or do you still think that you can get Nicky Brent away from me?"

There was something of a sneer in this last speech. Carol made no reply to it, and Mrs. Palmer continued quickly:

"Win him away from me, at a cost of having his infatuation for me ruin his father and himself. You have a fair choice. Make it. I will play fair with you."

"I must think it over, at least," Carol had to say.

"But I am taking very few chances. I have myself to look out for. By the time we have finished dinner to-night, I must know. I shall come to you, here, for your answer. I will show you the letters, if you like, then; but as soon as you are satisfied that they are all I have told you, then you must leave this place immediately."

"Very well. I shall meet you here after dinner—say at half past nine to-night."

"Agreed. You may even tell Nicky, if you like. He'll be anxious enough to

save himself, and probably be very grateful to you, however ashamed," Mrs. Palmer reminded Carol.

"I'd not do that, at any rate," Carol said. "It would be fatal to Nicky, I believe, to destroy the respect he now

has for his father."

Mrs. Palmer left her then. Bertha returned to Carol, who was no longer in her great hurry, even at the expense of being late for dinner. With quick perception she took stock of the situation. Many things she had to know, and at once. Either Mrs. Palmer was an extraordinarily good actress—better than the "Twinkletoes," her sister, had been—or else her story was for the most part true. But you could scarcely trust such a woman very far.

"Bertha, please see that there is no one listening outside my door," she said.

And when a negative reply came back, she put in a call from the telephone extension in her room, for Petrus Brent in New York. Then she commanded her maid to fetch Mortimer Vandine to her at once. The telephone connection was soon made. Petrus Brent's voice sounded from the other end of the line.

"I told you," she said blithely, "that I would try to keep track of Nicky's

affairs out here."

"And a good thing, Carol. If you hadn't called—in fact, I'm coming out anyway, if I don't get some news from him to-night."

"What, has he told you nothing? Didn't he telephone?" Carol asked in

real surprise.

"Yes, he telephoned, and told me he thought everything was all right, but that he didn't feel up to making a complete report to me yet. Could you swallow that, Carol, if you were in my place?"

"I wouldn't judge him too harshly, if I were you. He's a man, after all, and men are—well, perhaps you know better than I what they are." She laughed dulcetly. "But what I want to know is

this: is he likely to have any valuable papers or documents with him?"

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"Great Jupiter, yes! All the proxies he picked up in Europe. They could never be replaced in time for the stockholders' meetings if he lost them."

"I see," Carol said thoughtfully,
"Why? Why do you ask?" he demanded. "You sound queer to me,
Carol. Things out there aren't as they

"They're as right as they can be."

"I'm coming out."

ought to be.'

"You'd better stay away."

"I tell you, I'm coming out there. Starting in ten minutes. You tell Nicky."

"You'd better stay away."

"I'll be there in less than two hours," was Petrus Brent's answer; and he gave her no opportunity of arguing against him, for he hung the receiver up with his last snorted word.

That was a little more than Carol had bargained for. However, no matter now. It might be more to his discredit than he thought.

Mortimer Vandine came to her, ponderous and red cheeked and a little

shy.

"If it was anybody but you, Carol, who had sent for me, I'd have thought it something of a gallant adventure, and —but—well, here I am, anyway."

"And thinking it a gallant adventure, you'd have sent back a note of regret, wouldn't you?" She laughed back at him. "Anyway, you're here, and that's the chief thing. Tell me, Mortimer, you trust me with Nicky Brent's affairs, don't you?"

"Nicky does, too, doesn't he?" Mortimer evaded, rather ponderously in

character.

"Yes, but he's got reasons for not telling me what I want to know."

"I suspect so. I'm sorry, Carol."
"So you must tell me. At least, has he told you anything about his success in Europe?"

"Something rather queer about that," Mortimer had to admit under her searching scrutiny.

"What is it?"

"I'd rather he told you."

"He won't tell."

"Oueer!" He wrinkled his brows. "I think I will tell you. 'He cleared up the whole thing beautifully, picked up proxies enough to swing the stockholders' meeting, left 'em in my safedeposit vault Saturday morning. I gave him a receipt for the bag. Queer! He wouldn't tell me anything. I told him to deliver 'em to his father. He told me his father wasn't to know at all-not yet. I was to keep 'em, and say nothing. Not ever say anything. He impressed it on me, And I was to deliver them only to himself; not ever to anybody else. Queer, wasn't it, Carol?"

Carol thought for a moment.

"Not awfully, when you come to think about it," she said. "'By, Mortimer. See you later. Don't spread the news too wildly that you came to see me at my invitation, and found me in my peignoir!"

"Carol!"

"Light jest, Mortimer, with a lot of warning hidden under it. Don't tell even Marcia. Such meetings as these really should be kept a secret from doting wives, don't you think? Don't you think?"

Vandine struggled out, more perplexed than ever. Throughout dinner he sat open mouthed at her gayety, beside him; tried once or twice to question her in whispers, and got no reward

for his pains.

After dinner, Mrs. Palmer kept her rendezvous to the minute. She brought with her the usual beribboned package which Carol had always associated with such material relicts of burned-out intrigues.

"Have you decided?" Mrs. Palmer

asked with tense restraint.

"Yes. I shall accept; provided these se are what you say they are, and-all of 12 them there are."

"The solemnest oath I know, these are all there are-all, I give you my see word." Who could have failed to believe her then, unless she were-as indeed she might be-consummate actress? "Look them over, if you like."

"A sample will do."

Carol took the first that came to hand. Petrus Brent's distinctive, spatulate chirography, without a doubt, penning endearments that at first sight rather repelled Carol, considering that they proved her idol to have had its feet of clay. But then, Petrus Brent had amply atoned for whatever slightly tangential course his amouristic life had taken.

"They're more interesting later on."

Mrs. Palmer suggested.

"They're interesting enough so far. I don't need to go any further." "And you accept the bargain?"

"Quite! I'll tell Marcia Vandine whatever I have to, to save her feelings about you, and slip out carefully. want no commotion about my going, for her sake. And you may run along and tell Nicky. Best of juck to you.

Mrs. Palmer left. Carol sent word for Marcia, and broke the astonishing news to her, refusing steadfastly to sup-

plement it by any explanation.

"I do want you, however," she con-cluded her speech to Marcia, "to break the news to Nicky before I go. Right away, if you can. And without asking him to come and see me before I go, I want you to tell him in such a deft way that he will come and see me. You do those things beautifully, Marcia. Do it beautifully now."

The result of Marcia's errand was exactly what she had anticipated it would be. Nicholas Brent knocked at her door before she had completed orders for

her packing.

"Carol, I must see you for a moment."

"Oh, yes, Nicky. Well, come in."

"Carol, why are you going away? Because you are disgusted with my behavior with Mrs. Palmer?"

She pitied the man intensely at that

"Nicky," she told him, suddenly very happy in her pity for him, "why have you never told me that you loved me?" "What? Carol, what makes—how do

you know-"

"Mrs. Palmer told me. I'm sorry for her. She didn't meant to. Why have

you never-"

"But, Carol, how dared I tell you? Me, a clown? Then me, poverty-stricken? Then me—— Oh, Carol, do you know why I have been playing the game with Mrs. Palmer? It is a game. You must believe it. Do you know why? Can I tell you?"

"You don't have to tell me the last part, Nicky. I know why. This—these letters? Was not that the reason

why?"

She pointed out to him the package of letters. He pounced upon them; would have torn open the package in his eagerness.

"No, I think not, if you don't mind." She restrained him gently. "I'd rather you didn't take lessons—in this affair at least—from your father."

"Carol, what are you talking about? And how did you get these letters?"

"You knew she had them, didn't you? And for that reason didn't deliver the proxies to your father, fearing lest you might have—might possibly have to buy these letters back at the expense of the proxies. Which, for your father's and mother's sake, you were willing to do, and take failure for yourself. Is not that right?"

"Carol, how do you know all these

things?"

"Not so difficult to piece together things which a love-mad woman tells

you. If she hadn't succumbed to your very skillful philandering—"

"Oh, Carol, not that. At least, I suppose it was that. But she deliberately tried it with me, and, if you hadn't been always with me back there in England, she'd have succeeded, too. Then I heard about these letters, and I thought that, if she had played at the game, I was quite justified in taking a hand my self according to her own rules. Though if I had lost at her game, I always had the proxies to fall back on—"

"And you've outplayed her at every point. Nicky, I'm sorry, but she's mad about you—simply mad. If only you will do as well by me as you have done by her— Oh, Nicky, why did you never tell me that you loved me, that I meant something in your life? Still, I understand why, and love you for it

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all the more."

"Carol!" he said, quite speechless

otherwise.

"And now I must go, to keep my end of the bargain. You stay on here, and undo as much as you can of what you have done to the poor soul. I'll take these with me. I'll probably go back with your father, who is coming out here. Perhaps on the way back I can talk him into giving her something for what she has lost."

"Carol, don't mention these letters to him. I don't want him to know—"

"True enough, Nicky. More and more I love you. And we both love him, do we not? May I tell him, though, that you have his proxies, or whatever they are?"

"He's coming, you say?"

"So he said."

"I'll watch for him-tell him myself.

Carol, bless you!"

"And now, Nicky, go back to Mrs. Palmer. She needs you. And do try, Nicky, do try to undo what you've done. I do feel so sorry for her."

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The Conjuror's Lady

By Izola Forrester

Author of "A Cafó in Cairo,"

"Salvage," etc.

CHAPTER IX.

A FTER leaving Yetive, Talbot walked up the Avenue to the Brevoort, and paused on the corner. The night only half over. Curiosity of La Quesada, and the renewed zest for adventure which the sight of Yetive had aroused in him, caught his imagination. He hailed a taxi and left the location of the Bandolero to the driver, relaxing over a cigarette as the car circled about, and took a route through deserted, zigzag streets over to the West Side.

The discovery of Yetive after he had thought he had lost her absolutely, meeting her again, hearing her voice with its peculiar quality, silver toned, hesitant, low pitched, all the disturbing, enthralling nearness of her personality, had plunged him back into the state of restless, unsatisfying ecstasy that he had been in on board ship. To-night she had been even more appealing when she had turned to him for aid and understanding. He discounted any actual danger in the task which she had set His encounter with Lopez earlier that evening had left him without any particular dread of him as a And with La Quesadamenace. money was the final and all-sufficient argument with women of her type. He believed that Yetive was too close to her own problem to get a proper focus on the situation. He had heard of the Rolland formula while in Europe, and realized its enormous benefit if developed rightly. But, after all, in the great issues of love and life, it counted nil. He would get it back for her because she had asked him to, the golden bough for his lady fair. Then she might sell it to the government or bury it forever, so far as he was concerned. All that mattered now was that he was the man to whom she turned in her hour of need.

The car stopped at the curb, and he stepped out. The Bandolero was easy to distinguish from its less-exotic neighbors. It stood in one of the triangular sections between West Street and Seventh Avenue, south of Fourteenth Street. In a block of red-brick, oldfashioned houses with deep doorways, and mansard roofs, its brown and tangerine awnings marked its temperamental digression. Its exterior of ocher-toned stucco had been an architectural afterthought, also the remodeled basement with the arched doorways and green tubs planted with orange trees and junipers.

Within one found the first floor removed entirely, giving place to an elaborate entrance hall in Spanish style, with restaurant and dancing floor beyond. Above, a stairway led to a low-ceiled mezzanine balcony with more tables. The walls were of heavy stucco decorated in gaudy, effective figures that might have slipped from the sketches of Goya. Argentine players thrummed low music from guitars and mandolins, indolently, dispassionately, their languid indifference a contrast to the jazz en-

thusiasts uptown.

Talbot found a table on the balcony where he had a complete view of the frequenters of the place. South American students, he thought. West Indian bootleggers from the water front, political driftwood from the Latin republics, and about them all an air of comradeship, of intimacy hard to grasp at or analyze.

A certain code of etiquette appeared to hold the tempo of the resort taut at his own unexpected entrance at such an Luiz, the young, sloe-eyed waiter, showed him, if anything, too obsequious attention when he ordered coffee and a liqueur. At the far end of the restaurant below, he saw a long, narrow table lighted by tall cathedral candles in black, iron holders, the table strewn with red roses. When the boy returned, Talbot handed him a crumpled bill, not too large to excite suspicion, but large enough to stimulate atentiveness. He asked what special occasion awaited the festivity.

Luiz kissed fervent finger tips at the orange-tinted ceiling. The señor knew of La Quesada, the greatest dancer in Europe, the wine of all life, the flower of the Argentine? Always when she arrived in New York, she deserted the luxury and stupidity of hotel life uptown, and came here to her old friends at the Bandolero. She was not spoiled by wealth and success.

"I saw her dance in Paris," Talbot remarked.

"So?" Luiz's eyebrows lifted at the outer corners in delighted understanding. "And so the señor is here now! But it is to be deplored that she will not dance—not in New York. She is on her way home. You know her real name, señor? It is Mercita Mendez. Of the people, absolutely. I know her three brothers well; they run mule teams from Los Renejos down to the coast; very fine boys. Let no one ever tell you she is not the grand woman. She pour out her money to the poor and the

church all the time. She take care of dozens of her own people. She give over half the money for a new hospital, I know. And Serafin Lopez is not her boss, understand me? She is not afraid of him, and he is king, I tell you, señor, in South America. She can make a fool out of any man. They kill themselves for her anywhere she go. She is one gay girl. I wish she give me one real rose to-night, that's all."

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"You expect Lopez down to-night?" asked Talbot casually.

The boy shrugged indifferent shoulders.

"We never know when he come, when he go. But this is not his party. He don't know she is here even. She arrive this morning. To-night the theater some place, and then the dance some other place, and soon her friends down here and supper."

Presently Talbot noticed a change sweep over the entire place. Taxis stopped outside; the sleepy proprietor came to life; the music flowed into a sensuous tango movement. It was as if a breeze had blown over a motionless garden plot. The outer doors swung wide, and La Quesada sauntered in, followed by a laughing, excited group of friends. Acclaimed with shouts from her waiting admirers and fellow Argentinians, she took the head of the long table, scattering the welcome with a careless upward flash of both large white hands.

From where Talbot sat, he could look down upon the assembly. Voices rose high above the music as the lavish service of food and wines began. He did not understand Spanish, and asked the rapt Luiz what they were saying.

"Of her, all the time they speak—only of her," he exclaimed. "Look at her! The richest dancer in all the world, the most famous, and she is here at home and happy."

Talbot nodded. Here there was no pretense, no necessity of her appearing

anything but her natural self. She leaned with both plump, tapering arms upon the table, her wide mouth flashing into smiles over white, even teeth, eyes half closed like a contented lioness at the adulation heaped upon her. denly her glance roved upward, drawn irresistibly, it seemed, by the intent look of Talbot. Her black brows drew together, puzzled, seeking to remember where she had seen him before, like this, at an upper table on a mezzanine balcony, gazing down at her. She drew back from her companions, her teeth pressed into her underlip, thinking deeply, rapidly, and clapping her hands together for silence, she called out to him imperiously:

"Come down here, carito."

When Talbot failed to move or answer, Luiz touched his shoulder eagerly. "You hear, señor, she calls you. Go

quickly."

La Quesada left her friends, strolling forward to meet him as he descended the stairs. When they met face to face, she smoked with slow, insolent assurance for a moment, looking him up and down. There was allurement and menace, too, in her manner.

"What you want here anyhow?" she

demanded curtly.

"You." The evident candor and brevity of his reply disarmed and non-plused her. Suspicion and curiosity, too, showed in her keen, brilliant eyes. Deliberately seating herself at the nearest table in a secluded corner under the balcony, she gave a brief order to the waiter, and turned to Talbot, with a luxurious abandon to the mood of the moment.

"Now, sit there and talk to me," she commanded. "I have seen you before. I never forget a face that interests me.

Where was it?"

"At the Café Tavary in Paris, nearly a month ago. I heard that you were in New York, and I wanted to see you at once." Again there flashed the incredulous challenge of her wide, black eyes to his.

"How do you know that I am here tonight?" she asked bluntly. "Nobody know that I am even in New York but

my own people."

"I had word from Paris when you sailed." His tone was cool and easy. At the inference underlying his answer, her manner changed. She smiled lazily, glancing back over her shoulder at her friends, and leaned forward confidentially. Planting both elbows on the bare table, she smoked with long, full inhalations of the Cuban cigarette she held.

"Who told you that I had sailed-

this some one in Paris?"

Talk had lowered about them. He felt there was the tension of danger in the air; that he was watched, suspected, most of all by this woman herself; that his safety lay solely in her approval of him.

"A friend who knew that I was interested in the same thing as yourself, the Rolland formula." His surety and boldness took her by surprise, and he followed up his offensive. "I will give you whatever Lopez has promised to pay for it, doubled."

Only the long, black lashes betrayed that she had heard or understood him. They dropped, concealing her betraying eyes, sparkling with greed at his offer. Dipping one finger tip in her wine, she traced a pattern on the table before her

indolently.

"How can I be sure of that, señor?"
He drew a check book from his pocket, and she threw out one hand across the table, gripping his wrist to

stop him.

"Put that away! Ah, but you are a crazy kind of man! You come down here to-night to find me. You don't care if you get a knife in your ribs, no? You get one idea, you come after me, and you have no love for me in your eyes. And you say to me, how much, like that, quick, brusque! I like it. And you will-

pay me now, this minute, so you get what you want. You are afraid that I will see Serafin to-morrow." She sat thinking deeply for a few moments, frowning, shrugging her shoulders. "Listen! I do not take the check from you, understand? You bring me here to-morrow night twenty-five one-thousand-dollar bills, and I will give the formula to you. My word, señor!"

He clasped the hand she extended across the table, and La Quesada

laughed softly.

"Listen, sweetheart, you know why I do this to him, to Serafin? You were in Paris and knew him. Were you with him on the boat when he came over here? Ah, I thought so!" She spoke with indrawn breath. "You tell me something. What girl he bring over here with him? I know all about it. Captain Bacharach is my good friend. I know all about her, how he dance with her all the time. You know her name?"

Talbot kept a grip on his nerves and

facial expression.

"Why, as I recall it, he showed an in-

terest in several."

"But this one, she is different. know all about it. I don't care." snapped her fingers disdainfully. "You find out for me if she is with him at the Ambassador now, you see? He don't know I am in town at all. I sell the Rolland formula to you just to show him what I think about him and this girl, see? We don't care, do we, carito?" She drank the contents of her glass at one swallow, gazing at him through half-closed eyes above its curving brim. "Come back here to-morrow night, any time-eight, nine, ten o'clock. I have a little private party for just my own friends in my rooms upstairs. bring me the money in cash, and I will give you the formula." Rising quickly, she turned about, waving her hand imperiously to the waiting group about her table. "My friends, I introduce to you, SeñorShe hesitated, and glanced back at him over one bare shoulder, her voice velvet soft and caressing:

"What your name, sweetheart?" Talbot told her truthfully.

"Palmer," she announced grandly; "my very dear friend, Señor Palmer, all the way from the Café Tavary to the Bandolero. When the señor come here any time, you treat him as my friend."

In the outburst of welcome, the music started again. She spoke quietly in dis-

missal, indifferently even.

"Luiz will show you the way upstairs to-morrow night. It is to-night, though, is it not? And remember, you find out all about her for me—everything! Good night, señor."

"Good night." Their hands clasped in understanding and agreement, as La

Quesada smiled slowly.

"Hasta luego," she whispered. "Until

we meet again."

He found himself ushered out by Luiz into the cool, early morning air. The stucco front showed no lights within. Only a muffled sound of mandolins came from behind the closed brown shutters of the Bandolero. He walked east toward Sixth Avenue with a sense of unreality, like wakening suddenly from a dream.

CHAPTER X.

The shades were not raised in La Quesada's apartment when Lopez's car paused before the Bandolero shortly after noon. A hurdy-gurdy rippled out the latest song hit across the street. Steamship whistles came from the river front, only two blocks away. The highly polished perfection of the new French model was a disturbing flaw in the picture of softly blurred undertones, mauve and sun-pierced smoke, shadows in deep rose and wistaria purples along the areas and under ledges, old buildings marvelously glorified in the hazy, early autumn light.

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weekly from Madrid, its comics in flat, bright colors, its cartoons a couple of heavy lines that seized unerringly the personal idiosyncrasies of victims. When Lopez walked quietly into the restaurant, the boy started up from his easy lounging on the window seat, and hurried to meet him.

"Tell Señorita Mendez that I wish to see her."

"She sleeps, señor." The boy spoke deprecatingly, but quite evidently under orders. Lopez made one slight movement with his slender cane, gave one look of interrogation, and Luiz led the way reluctantly to the third floor. Lopez motioned impatiently to him to rap upon the door.

Back in the high-ceiled, old-fashioned bedroom facing the south, La Quesada heard the rapping, and spoke indolently to Enriquita, her elderly maid. The woman returned stolidly, with a brief explanation of the intruder's identity. Her mistress stretched her arms high in the air, and yawned with the pleasure of having irritated Lopez.

"Keep him waiting," she said lazily.
"I will eat first."

She ordered a hearty breakfast, detaining the maid deliberately, keeping her caller waiting on her whim and convenience. She dallied over the menu, ordering things picturesque and plentiful-melon, chops, omelet with green peppers and pimentos, coffee, toast. When Enriquita had left, the dancer sprang out of bed and locked her door, waiting with her back against it, listening for an impatient knock on the other Instead, there was complete silence in the next room, although she knew Lopez awaited her there. Shrugging her shoulders, she lighted a cigarette and smoked with frowning annoyance, throwing it aside half consumed, dressing herself with dawdling delay.

When Enriquita brought up her breakfast tray, and Luiz had assisted in arranging the table to her whim, La Quesada sauntered out into the front room, wrapped in a brilliant negligee of parrot-green and coral-pink silk, her hair dressed with glossy, elaborate care. As no greetings passed between the two, Luiz and the maid hastened their departure nervously.

Lopez was seated at a desk, intently poring over the memoranda in his note-book, making additional jottings here and there with an abstracted air. She eyed him with suspicious curiosity, side-long, veiled glances that gained in unrest as she sat down to her breakfast with relish and appetite. Presently, he half turned in his chair, surveying her speculatively until she broke into expostulation.

"Well, what is it, Señor Adorado? Why do you trouble yourself to come down here to see me at this hour? How do you know that I have arrived, and anyway, what do you care?"

"You are always the greedy fool, Mercita," he answered quietly, regarding her method of consuming a broiled chop, both elbows poised upon the edge of the table. "When I am away from you, I lose the delightful charm of your little habits."

She threw the half-eaten chop backward over one shoulder into the expectant jaws of her pet black chow.

"You are very much annoyed; it is too bad. Who told you I was here?"

"Bacharach, of course. I knew as soon as you had left Paris. We're sailing to-morrow morning. Did you close with Rolland?"

He could not conceal his impatience, and she laughed at him with irritating contempt.

"So that is why you hurry down here so early? Not because you wish to see me, but to make sure I have this for you! And you call me the greedy fool, Serafin! You do not know how to manage me, Mercita Mendez, when you act like this. Yes, I have it. What you give me for it?"

"What we agreed: ten thousand dollars in cash."

She shook her head from side to side tauntingly.

"Not half enough, my caballero; not enough to pay for all my trouble."

He rose and crossed to her side, his muscles tense, his manner controlled even to the point of dignity. His tone was like a lash in her ears.

"Give it me!"

She reached lazily for another chop, disregarding him utterly. The next instant he had brought his cane across her bare, white shoulders with one swift cut that brought her screaming to her feet in rage and pain.

"You—you dare to come down here to me and threaten me after you leave me to do this work for you in Paris, and you have one time on board ship with some girl? You think I do not know, that you can do this to me?" He caught and twisted her wrist until the uplifted knife fell to the floor. Still holding her fast, he drew her to him, straining and fighting to free herself.

"A greedy little fool who will have all or nothing," he repeated softly. "Bacharach works for himself, remember that! He told you of some girl to make you jealous. It was a lie. She was nothing to me. I have never even seen her since the day we landed here. And you are sailing with me to-morrow on the Santa Ana."

She struggled angrily for a minute, and relaxed under his kiss, her arms reaching up about his neck. Laughing softly as he released her, she leaned back contentedly in his arms.

"When you pay me my money for the formula, sweetheart?"

For the moment she had forgotten entirely her agreement with Palmer. With his whispered assurance in her ears, she went into the inner room and unlocked one of her trunks. Inside a small leather case lay folded flat, the Rolland formula—Romlen's share. She

gave it to Lopez with a gorgeous, impassioned gesture of surrender, and curled up among the velvet cushions on the couch before the old-fashioned black grate. Lopez spread out the sheet of thin papers with a peculiar deliberation. Watching him with indolent, satisfied eyes, La Quesada smoked her favorite long Cuban, and was already in fancy, on board ship bound down the coast.

Suddenly he stood up and walked back to the couch. Tossing the paper over to her, he said with quiet contempt:

"It is useless to me. You have been tricked, Mercita. I would not give you one peso for this. It is just half of the original."

Seizing the paper excitedly, she sat up, scanning the close writing of Rolland, turning in fury upon Lopez.

"But it is one bad lie. You say this to me to make me give it up to you for less money. You think I do not know you. Now, you never get it, see? You insult me, you make me out a fool, a cheat."

"Some one has cheated," he returned with complete courtesy and control. "Either you or your friend in Paris. How much did you pay him for this?"

"What you gave me," she flung back hotly. "I did not try to cheat. Besides, he loved me."

"The thing is worthless. Dance, carita, but never try again to be clever. The danger in employing persons who are ignorant is that they themselves do not know when they are being cheated."

He moved toward the door, hat and coat on his arm, with no show of anger or even displeasure. It was his cool contempt that stung her. She swept after him with a swaggering challenge.

"So? And maybe I know just a little bit more than yourself, señor. Who knows? Maybe I am not quite so much the greedy little fool." She folded the paper and thrust it into her bosom. "I would not sell this to you now for any price."

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herself ness, someh vital i him thad go into s "Put it away tenderly, chiquita, with your many other souvenirs," he advised. She flung both hands upwards.

"Go away. You are one sublime pig, Serafin! Go and sail without me, I do not care, understand? I have made my own plans already. You think you do as you please; kiss me or kill me as you feel like. Maybe you find out something different."

The door closed quietly in her face on her last taunt. Outside on the landing Lopez found Enriquita, a patient, hunched-over figure who merely glanced at him sidelong as he descended the stairs. He paused for a moment.

"Pack for sailing to-morrow morning. The Santa Ana for Buenos Aires, nine o'clock. I will send my car down."

She peered between the railing to watch him safely out of sight. When the street door closed, she went softly back into the apartment, listening with anxious dread for an expected explosion of temper. Instead from the sleeping room there came La Quesada's voice singing as she continued her toilet before the long, swinging pier glass, a song of her own people:

"Ride on, caballero, the nightfall is near.

Maddalena, she awaits you, so tender and
dear.

If you find one before you, your sword is your friend. Good luck to your wooing, whatever attend."

Enriquita smiled to herself placidly, and stood looking out between the long lace curtains at Lopez entering his car.

CHAPTER XI.

As the morning passed and no word came to her from Talbot, Yetive found herself waiting with nervous restlessness, censuring him, suspecting that somehow he might have discounted the vital importance of what she had told him the night before; that, even if he had gone to the Bandolero, he had fallen into some hidden trap of Lopez.

She walked the floor of her room

moodily, her finger tips pressed to aching eyes, striving to see her way ahead if this failed. The face of her brother rose before her, lean, eager, boyish. Sobered into sanity by the flight of La Ouesada from Paris he must realize how the dancer had won his love deliberately to cajole and trick him into parting with the Rolland formula. He had not said directly in his letter how much he had been paid for it. Every dollar, of course, would be returned to Lopez and the woman to protect Romlen's honor. His honor? She drew in a long, deep breath, her teeth pressed together. Trafficked away for the favor of such a woman!

In the eight months since her father's death, Romlen had turned life into one perpetual fête, a nineteen-year-old Harlequin hitting Paris at the height of the season, believing every pretty woman a possible Pierrette and every other man a fool. Now he was stripped of legacy, honor, faith, everything but money. And he sent a wild signal of distress across the sea to her to save him. More, he had practically accused her of cheating him by her flight. But not one word of his own guilt in selling half of the formula and accepting payment in full from the agent of Lopez. Still, she hesitated at condemning him utterly in her own mind. Knowing his volatile nature with its plunges to extremes, she dreaded the reaction of remorse and disillusion which had evidently set in already. With father and mother dead, Romlen remained dearest on earth to her, excepting one other, and this she hardly dared confess to herself.

A thousand possibilities swept through her mind in a whirl of suggestion as the afternoon set in. Mrs. Chilton was away for the day, a guest at a Lakewood wedding. Yetive left her own luncheon untasted, and lay on a couch by the windows in the full sunlight, eyes closed, her hands clasped under her head. The truth slowly

forced its way to her secret consciousness. She was jealous for the first time in her life. She loved Talbot Palmer and had sent him to parley with the most fascinating and unscrupulous woman of

the hour, La Quesada.

She rose and crossed to the dressing table, staring with a new interest and curiosity at the face reflected there. Jealousy in a woman had always seemed to her so pitiful and futile, the open confession of a vanquished love. Love that was not rooted in faith could not be true. She covered her betraying face with both hands, feeling that she must call the Palmer residence. And, with the irresistible impulse, there came the call from Talbot himself. She caught the receiver eagerly, and heard his own voice, confident, cheerful. It seemed to reach out and enfold her in its surety.

He had not wanted to disturb her earlier, he said. There was no definite word yet, but the agreement had been made. He was to see the party that evening between eight and nine and there was no doubt but what the lost

article would be returned.

She left the telephone with a sense of keen disappointment. He had been brief and impersonal with her, following altogether too conscientiously her own instructions to him to be careful over the house wire. She felt that he knew nothing of the suspense that was torturing her, but it had been a relief even to hear his voice. She found she could dress and eat normally again. While she sat at luncheon, Major Powell was announced.

"Sorry to arrive like this, out of the air, you know, but I knew Adeline had gone out to the Elliot wedding, and thought you might like to run yourself up the Drive. Got a bird of a new car, French model." He smiled down at her as she hesitated. The invitation was a challenge to the new mood she had discovered in herself.

"I'd love it," she told him.

They took the Drive far up beyond Riverdale and Yonkers, to where wooded, secluded heights broke into long perspectives of the Hudson, or caught the misty, overlapping reaches of the lower Highlands. She realized suddenly that Powell was speaking of Romlen,

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"I didn't want to trouble you with all this, but word came this morning again, and he seems to have put the deal

through."

"I don't think I understand," she ex-"You mean that Romclaimed. len-"

"Sold out to Lopez-yes." He drew the car to a slow stop at the highest point in the roadway, and waited to light a cigarette. "You haven't heard from him, then?"

"Not up to the time I talked with you last night. I found a letter from him in my room after I had left you," She had a feeling as she spoke that he did not believe her. "I could not bear to tell you everything then, Major Powell, He's just been a fool, but whatever he has done cannot matter in the end."

"What do you mean?" He turned and looked at her with keen attention, Yetive raised her left arm and unclasped the bracelet which she always wore, a rounded band of broad, chased gold. Pressing it, she released a spring and the bracelet parted into two sections, each a perfect circle. Folded in the inner space of the larger one was a thin roll of paper. Yetive opened it and spread it out for him to read. It was one half of the Rolland formula, useless without the one which Romlen had sold in Paris. Powell examined it in silence.

"You see," she said, "why I have been forced to wait and make excuses to you. I only had this, my own half. That was why I made the journey to Paris to see Romlen. I tried to persuade him to join with me, but he was in love with the dancer, and would not even listen to me. When I heard that Lopez was sailing from Cherbourg, I believed what Romlen had told me—that he had already parted with his share to him. I crossed on the same boat under an assumed name, and met him. But when I attempted to make a search in his cabin, Captain Bacharach, his friend, saw me, and, I know, suspected me. I did not dare try again, so I waited until we reached New York. Mrs. Chilton was my own mother's dearest friend. She knew me as Justine Trelease, and I came to her. Perhaps, if she really knew everything, she would not even have me in her home."

"You don't know Adeline," Powell smiled back at her. "What have you done to deserve censure, anyway? You're not to blame in this affair of your brother's. You're foolish to isolate yourself from friendship or

love."

Something in his tone warned her, but she sat looking off at the river vista, balked by his sincerity from any easy evasion of his intent. Oddly, too, her mind was working impersonally on this new angle. Romlen was right. It was more than official duty that had led Harry Powell to interest himself in her. He was wealthy and influential, high in the confidence of the people she needed to back her offer to the government. Her actual association and contact with Talbot Palmer had been as vague as the wind, fleeting, half-expressed longing from him, an assumption that she understood his motive in aiding her, but nothing direct. She listened to Powell's quiet tones with a belief that she was refusing safety and surety when, inevitably, she must turn from him.

"The reason why I have wanted to help you, ever since I first saw you in London a year ago, was because I loved you. Perhaps you guessed it then, Yetive. That night coming from the American-embassy ball, remember? You seemed so young to carry sorrow. I wanted to help you after your father's

death, and this seemed the one thing you needed, putting over the Rolland discovery in the right way as he would have wished it. May I——" He clasped the bracelet back in place after she had replaced the folded paper. She looked up and met his eyes, her own compassionate and embarrassed.

"There isn't the ghost of a chance," she told him simply. "I feel like a dog to say that after all you've done for me, but it's the truth. Besides, I don't seem to belong to myself. As soon as this is settled—and it will be in a day or two now, I can promise that—I shall go back to Romlen, and try and make him stand up straight and find his way again. Everything is coming out right. I can't tell you now, but I will have the entire formula in my hand within a few days. I must clear Romlen first—"

"Rot!" said Powell briefly. "You are cursed with the fetish of self-sacrifice: first your father and now Romlen: giving up your life and energy to them. I'm sure, dear, that we'd hit it off together as trail mates. You know I am very deeply in love with you. Probably I don't show it convincingly. Highways and corridors cramp my style, and you've never given me a chance to be alone with you. You can't know how I felt when I found you had left England, and I realized what I had put you in for. I mean in Paris, I knew what Romlen was doing then."

A long silence, and she asked nervously, as he smoked beside her without even looking at her:

"Shall we turn back?"

"If you like." He tossed away the cigarette, and started up the engine, backing around. She thought what a good sportsman he was, what a fool she was, perhaps, not to appreciate him instead of following the wild adventure she had plunged into once she had stepped on board the Caronia as Talbot Palmer's sister. Yet she could sit beside him there in the car with nothing

deeper than a sense of security and friendship, gratitude, but never a thrill of love, when even the mere sound of Talbot's voice over the telephone could torment and satisfy her at the same instant.

When they reached the house on the Square, she lingered, her hand in his close clasp.

"You've been wonderful to me. I hate to hurt you, but it just can't be," she said softly.

"I suppose you're out of reach, on another wave length. Well, I wish you all the luck in the world, my dear. Don't think of me at all. I shouldn't have spoken when you were worried about your brother. By the way, the last news we had this morning was that Lopez sails early to-morrow morning for Buenos Aires. He has booked passage for two—himself. La Quesada, and servants—on the Santa Ana. Give my best to Adeline. I don't want to stay tor tea. Good-by."

She paused on the vestibule step, watching him return to his car, and went on up to her room with cheeks flushed from more than the wind. It was after five by the clock on her desk. Talbot had either failed, or been tricked by La Quesada, she felt positive. Lopez would not be leaving New York if he were in any doubt about the formula. He had it from the dancer, and believed she had secured the entire thing. lowing her first impulse, Yetive called Mr. Lopez was in. the hotel. waited while he was being paged, wondering what she would say to him, until his voice came, curt with a buoyant, arrogant curiosity.

"I must see you at once, Señor Lopez," she said softly. "Do you know who is speaking?"

"Do I know? I have searched for you all over New York. Where are you now?" Eager, imperative, his voice seemed to reach out to her demandingly. "Will you dine with me to-night?"

"Perhaps. I want to talk with you on business."

"I will know how to stop you," he laughed softly back at her. "Business, with the most adorable, clusive girl I have ever met? Where have you been all this time? I will send my car for you wherever you say."

"I would rather not, please."

"Some very lovely, secluded place where we may talk without disturbance."

"I would rather be where there are people and music."

"Ah, the cautious lady ever." He laughed under his breath teasingly. "Then at seven shall we say, here?"

"At seven," she agreed.

There was need of letting Talbot know, she felt, the latest development, that Lopez and the dancer were booked to sail early the following morning. It might serve to warn him from his appointment with her that evening. She called up his home with assurance, asking to speak with him. Sutton's voice came back regretfully. Mr. Palmer was out. He was not dining at home. He did not know where to reach him.

She sat down to write a long letter to Romlen, a mingling of reproaches and loving consolation. He had been a ridiculous donkey, a perfect fool to place trust in La Quesada, to let her lead him on to ruin. But it was not too late, perhaps. She would do her best to retrieve the formula, but, if she succeeded, he must let her dispose of it as she saw fit. She was about to add more, to tell him of Talbot and of Powell, but held back. Romlen was as trustworthy as a megaphone with any secrets. She finished her letter with advice from him to go back to Fontenoy; probably she would meet him there within the month. And until then, all her heart's love to

As she prepared to dress, something metallic fell from a web of lace and necklaces in her dresser drawer. She her pa musing bot ha her wh slipped wishin himsel with I ing of was a Ameri concre was a suavit intrig tated, the t the do she w Th

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stooped and recovered it, holding it on her palm with a little smile, tender, musing. It was the latchkey which Talbot had insisted upon her taking with her when she had left his home. She slipped it into her evening hand bag, wishing she could speak with Talbot himself before she kept her engagement with Lopez. It would give her a feeling of security merely to know that he was aware of her being with the South American. Not that she feared any concrete danger. To her Serafin Lopez was a social brigand. His debonair suavity and charm of manner had never intrigued or deceived her. She hesitated, one hand at the last moment on the telephone. Some one tapped at the door-Mrs. Chilton's maid asking if the were dining out.

The interruption hurried her decision. Unlocking her traveling case, she took out a small, flat French automatic in a fawn-colored suède case, and slipped it into her black-satin bag.

CHAPTER XII.

When she walked through the lounge at the great hotel at seven, Yetive found Serafin Lopez awaiting her with apparent nonchalance. Only the suppressed fire in his dark eyes warned her of his suspense as he crushed her hand

close in his grasp.

"I think possibly you have regretted already calling me, and may not come after all; then you are here before me." His glance covered her entire ensemble with approval. She wore black satin, soft, lustrous folds that clung in shadows to her slender, shapely figure, and left her white shoulders and throat in beautiful relief. No ornaments or jewels except the broad, gold bracelet on her left arm. Their table had been reserved with Lopez's usual care for effect. A secluded corner of the mezzanine above the dance oval. Topaz lights in black-and-gold shades, flat, gold walls that gave her head the beauty of an old-time Florentine panel by Angelico. Lopez looked at her with the mask fallen from his eyes. He had none of the accepted characteristics of a villain, she thought, young, extremely handsome, magnificently cocksure.

"I have believed that anything might happen," he said, "except that you yourself would call me up. Why did you choose to vanish off the face of the earth? Either you were afraid of me, or you enjoyed making me suffer for this hour. Where have you been in hiding since I lost you at the pier?"

It amused him to discover whether she knew that he had discovered her deception, or whether, even now, she would pretend to be Marion Palmer. If the former, then he would know that she was in communication with Palmer

himself.

"I have been with a friend of my mother's." She told him the truth with pretense, yet he looked at her with keen,

disbelieving eyes.

"You are very clever; the most fascinating, elusive lady I have ever known. I have a curious feeling that even now as I sit here, you may disappear before my eyes. Also, I am positive that you are fully aware that I have encountered your erstwhile brother most unpleas-

"At the Club Palatine last evening." She said it without parleying with him. "It was awkward, was it not?"

"Awkward? Good heavens! I go mad when I see a girl who I think is yourself. I make a fool of myself, and she is not you at all. Then I discover that Palmer has but one sister, and necessarily we have an argument."

"I know," she assented. "Mr. Palmer told me of it. I am sorry it happened. You see, there was no chance to explain to you once we had landed." She smiled at him, her nerve tension lessening. The eager admiration in his eyes was disarming. "But to-night I had to see you personally, Señor Lopez."

"I do not want reasons. You are here of your own free will. It is enough

to glorify the night to me."

"But not because I wished to come," she insisted. "You must understand that. I want to talk freely with you, to be perfectly frank. I have been told that you are—well, rather an uncertain sort of a person."

"The pattern for Satan," he laughed, pleased at the flattery. "The latest model for devil worshipers in Paris, yes? You are adorably misleading,

Yetive Rolland."

She was silent for a moment, her lashes drooping. He bent forward, lowering his tone to a gentle, caressing assurance.

"Don't you suppose I knew all the time you were on the boat? You came under another name so that you could meet me. You thought that your brother had already sold to me his formula, and that you would be able to get it away from me before we reached

port. Am I right?"

"Do you know, I don't believe you." She met his eyes with cool, leveled gaze. "You did not know who I was on the Caronia. Captain Bacharach suspected when he saw me coming from your cabin, but you did not know. You believed that I was Marion Palmer until you saw the real girl at the Palatine. You have found out since then what my name is."

He smoked in quiet, amused silence. "Beautiful," he said softly, under his breath, "I do not care what you say as long as I may sit and watch you. I adore you when you are enraged. You are so still and proud, like an infuriated lioness—the small, dangerous black lioness of the heart of Africa. I have hunted and killed them, beautiful."

"I wonder if you can possibly understand how I have put all my faith in this last chance of seeing you. I have heard that you are sailing in the morning for

South America."

"You have very good ears, my dear." His brilliant eyes, dancing with surety and enjoyment of the situation, almost crashed through her defense, but she went on earnestly:

"I had a letter from my brother in Paris saying that he had sold his share of our father's formula for solium to La Quesada, who was acting as your

agent."

"Even so?" His hand reached suddenly across the table and closed over her own. "Why do you speak tonight of such things-formulas, brothers: ridiculous when there is absolutely no one at all in the world but ourselves. just you and myself. You are also like a marvelous snake we have in the Argentine, glossy, black, small, and most deadly. I have seen one slip from the limb of a tree about the neck of a horse and strangle it as it swayed. have you come here for to-night, beloved? To ask the return of this slip of paper? Yetive. I would give you a thousand formulas if I had them, but, as it happens, I have not got this that you speak of. And I do not lie to you. I tell the sacred truth. I will swear by anything you fancy, but, if you wish it to be positive, make it yourself. I swear to you by your own worth to me that I have not got this thing."

"Perhaps you have not got it yourself, but you know where it is." She looked deep into his eyes until they wavered slightly in their adoring gaze, and his brows raised. "Will you see that it is returned to me? I will give back the money paid to Romlen. could never understand what this means to me. It was the last hope of my father's whole life. He gave his strength and health to achieve its final consummation. He believed that it would prove the greatest antidote for war; it would simplify the labor of life so amazingly that the whole struggle of human existence would be lessened Men fight as people pick quarrels, from overwro competi He dowly, pleaded "You

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He leaned nearer to her, smoking slowly, watching her white throat as she

oleaded desperately.

"You know it is most entrancing! There is a tiny pulse there at the side of your throat that beats palpably as you talk. It should be kissed, carissima. Why do you ever trouble your adorable head about these other things? I have told you, you are my queen. It is my privilege to give you anything you like, see? But"-with a shrug-"I have not got this formula. I swear I have not got it, but I will do this. Because I love you above all other women to-night, I will get it for you, I will restore it to you from La Quesada. It will be worth the ultimate joy of having banished that look from your wonderful eyes."

Yetive, watching him across the table, wondered whether he was speaking the truth or merely cajoling her. His air of nonchalant worship was baffling. In the Latin manner, he appeared to be desperately in love. His eyes implored mercy; eager, fiery, they seemed to penetrate into heart and mind as he gazed at her. It was disconcerting when the had armed herself with thorough suspicion of his motives. She shot a

direct question back at him.

"Tell me this: why did you want my father's formula in the first place? If it is worth so little to you now, why did you go to such extremes of mystery

to get possession of it?"

"So little to me? Hear how her most adorable majesty speaks of herself! I have not rested since I first looked in your eyes that night on the boat. I have never known one single waking moment that was not consumed with the longing for you. Why do you think I have tayed on here in New York, putting off my sailing for Buenos Aires in the hope of finding you again?"

"You have been waiting for La

Quesada to arrive from Paris," she interposed with a little half smile.

"Possibly, but that is merely one small reason. The great incentive was to find you again. I will get you back this paper you want. It is, perhaps, worth millions. I will give it back to you and prove I am sincere. And I shall not sail to-morrow for the Argentine."

Her hands grew chilled at his hidden meaning. It was a bargain, undeclared and unconfirmed, but an understood and sacred bargain nevertheless. So much for so much. He would return to her Romlen's share for her own love. Her mind raced back and forth, seeking a way of escape, as he talked to her during the dinner. She never ceased to play up to his mood of delight in finding her again, to interest and charm him, even while she saw the immediate danger ahead of her.

The dancer was at the Bandolero. Talbot had his appointment to see her there that night. Why had she not believed in him, she thought, instead of taking the initiative herself, and meet-

ing Lopez?

"You do not believe in me yet?" he said suddenly. "I can see it in your eyes now as you look back at me. You are evasive and skeptical, a most maddening girl. Listen! Come with me now, wait for me outside in my car, and I will get this formula for you and put it in your hand, so that you will forget it, and only think of me." He smiled at her like a boy delighted at his own strategy.

"It can wait until morning," she returned quickly. "Really, I do believe you. I would rather wait until morn-

ing."

"And I would rather not. I do not wish to wait—not one more hour to have your faith in me proven. I will get it for you now. And I will not leave you here, nor anywhere else to wait for me. You have the magic gift of vanishing, my beautiful." He motioned to their

waiter to sign the check. "You will come?"

"But it is ridiculous for me to go," she urged. "Supposing some one saw

"That would be nothing at all. It is an accustomed sight, only that you are the most marvelous." He laughed back at her. "I will not be gone ten minutes. You will be perfectly safe and unseen, I promise you."

"I will wait for you here in the

lounge."

"You will go with me, or I will go alone, and I will take pleasure in destroying this cursed formula myself." His dark eyes held a dancing devil of mischievous challenge. "Here I am ready to toss away millions in money and power, world wide, for you, and you will not do this small and trivial favor for me—to ride with me, to wait while I go into the Bandolero and get this for you. There is absolutely no danger, nothing, but that you should trust me."

She rose to leave, half convinced; fearful, too, over Talbot's safety. If she were there, she might possibly be able to warn him, to control Lopez if he discovered him.

"Where is the place you are going?" she asked.

"A South American restaurant and stopping place, called the Bandolero. Any one here knows it. La Quesada prefers to make it her headquarters, since she has her friends there from the Argentine, and she is there, I know." As she still hesitated, he was suddenly grave, offended by her suspicion. "Of course, if you are afraid to come with me, telephone to your friends where you are going and with whom. It is simple. Since you choose to mistrust me."

"No, I will go." She swept her cloak about her with quick resolution. As they left the hotel, Lopez smiled down at her with pride in her courage.

"Supposing that I have arranged to leave the hotel to-night because I fully intend to capture my moonbeam, you see how brave you are to go with me." She could not tell whether he was in earnest or not. "I would not take the chance of your vanishing again. Aren't you afraid to venture with me?"

"I would not have come at all to-night if I had the least fear of you," she told him briefly. He helped her into the luxurious interior of his foreign car, black and silver, and drew up the black panther robe about her. There leaped into his expression again the peculiar, bovish delight in her presence.

"You are the one person in the whole world who says that with truth to me, and I believe you. You are not afraid of me. You are not afraid of the very devil himself. Do you know why? I tell you. It is because you are yourself Señorita Diabola. I salute, beloved."

Yetive avoided his embrace, one arm outflung quickly.

"Not yet," she said.

The inferred postponement behind her words intrigued his imagination.

"You know," he returned quickly, "you are very clever; you are different from other women; you know how to make delays, to outplay me. I like it. You treat me like the captain of the guard; a nod from the queen and he may be her guest that night, possibly, or else thrown from her window to the waiting spears at daybreak. would make a great painting, would it not-the open casement, the Arabian dawn just breaking, and the queen should have your eyes, my precious, and just that look in them this minute of most adorable indifference. Will it change, I wonder, when I hand you the formula?"

As the car drew up fifteen minutes later before the Bandolero, Lopez stepped out and spoke to the chauffeur in Spanish. He turned back to her with under "I e

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her nia with sudden impassioned emphasis under his ease of manner.

"I expect that you will be here when

"If you are afraid, I will go in there with you." She looked into his eyes coolly, her own clear and without fear,

until, disarmed, he laughed. "It is not expected of you, beautiful. I believe you." She watched him pass through the low, gayly painted doorway, her heart beating rapidly. It was half past eight. Talbot had told her his appointment with La Quesada was between eight and nine. The minutes passed slowly, while she sought desperately some way to evade the chauffeur, and reach the door of the restaurant. Surely she could be of help to Talbot, she thought. She carried her revolver in the gray-and-silver handbag. while she knew he was unarmed. Suddenly she smiled to herself, and took out her eigarette case. Selecting one, she held the case carelessly in her left hand, and leaned forward, speaking from the window that was open toward the street.

"Pardon, but have you a light, please?"

The man turned instantly, a lean, young Frenchman with alert, admiring eyes. As he struck a match and held it toward her, she deliberately let her cigarette case fall out of the window. He swung down from his seat to recover it, and the moment he had stooped Yetive opened the opposite door, and was out of the car, across the sidewalk, and into the brown-and-yellow doorway.

CHAPTER XIII.

The somewhat shabby rooms above the restaurant had been transformed to suit the glamour of La Quesada's mood that night. From ten to two she received her New York friends and Lopez was not included.

Gowned in tangerine velvet cut to her waist in the back, curved like petunia petals at its edge, she paced about the rooms watching Luiz and Enriquita complete the decorations. Flowers and palms everywhere, four or five gilded cakes with gaudy parrots and one querulous cockatoo, costly, embroidered panels concealing the faded wall paper, and a long, narrow, black table set for a midnight feast. She regarded it all contentedly, half closing her eyes as she inhaled deeply, her painted lips parted in a slow, upcurled smile of complete satisfaction.

Within her locked traveling bag hidden in the bedroom closet, reposed the money she had just received from Talbot Palmer-twenty-five thousand dollars in cash. He had arrived promptly at eight. The interview had been disappointingly brief to the señorita. Men who were accorded the privilege of seeing her alone in her private apartment anywhere, usually were appreciative. Palmer had been impersonal and businesslike, had paid over the money, and left as soon as possible. When she had handed him the paper she had taken from Romlen Rolland, he had examined it closely in silence.

"You think you are being cheated, señor?"

"No, it seems to be all right," he had responded. "I'm grateful to you for parting with it."

She shrugged indifferent shoulders. "As for that, it is nothing whatever to me, understand. Rolland—he got his money for it. Why should I not get mine? But I will tell you this much, because I like you very much; I like your courage, your cleverness in coming here to me—all that. But you say you know Lopez. If he finds out you have that paper, your life is not worth one little cent—not that much."

"So I understand." He smiled back at her with a coolness that caught her fancy. She strolled over to him with lifted lips of invitation.

"You are not afraid of him, are you?

Neither am I. We kiss just once and wish each other good luck, eh?"

Disregarding the opportunity, Talbot had raised her hand and kissed it in Continental fashion. After he had gone, she had stood by the window watching the street eagerly as she saw him step into a red-and-black roadster parked across the way, and start off. What possible reason could he have, she wondered, for paying over twenty-five thousand dollars for a scrap of paper? Lopez might take it and turn it into millions. He was a wizard at money craft. But this New Yorker, correct, indifferent, handsome! He annoyed her vaguely. She waited until after Luiz and the maid had finished. Then she drew out the bills and counted them once more before changing them from her bosom to the traveling case. From the inner room she caught a tap on the outer door and called carelessly:

"Come in!"

It was Captain Bacharach. He had been drinking, but his manner was more pointedly controlled than usual. His gray eyes held a peculiar heaviness as he closed the door behind him and looked unsteadily at the woman in the doorway opposite.

"Did you get it?" he inquired lacon-

ically.

"What do you mean? You are crazy, Leon." She spoke excitedly, her dark eyes blazing at him. "I have my friends here to-night. Go away at once."

"I saw Palmer leave here. You come across quick and split even, or I

will go to Lopez now."

"All right, go to him. You know so much; you are so sure of everything. You saw a man leave my apartment. What of that? It is my business, understand!" She crossed the room and stretched herself deliberately on the couch. "What you want to fight about, sweetheart? Maybe I got the formula still. Who knows?"

Inwardly her mind scouted like a

hunted thing, seeking a way of escape, some roundabout maneuver that would eliminate Bacharach from any final reckoning. He stared down at her with admiring, contemptuous eyes.

"You're a wise devil, Mercita, but you can't fool me. I know your system. You've sold the formula to Palmer, and you've cached the money he gave you. Get it out. We break even, ma chirie."

"What you mean, break even?" she demanded insolently. "Because I have some other man up here, you are jealous, you must threaten me. You don't know La Quesada. You think she care what any man say or think. Go away from me! You are absurd."

She gave a gesture of dismissal, but stooping, he seized her in his arms. Struggling to free herself, she beat at his face with her two hands, repelling

his kisses.

"You honeybee!" He laughed down into her enraged eyes. "You know you can trick and fool any man but me. I know you. You hand over that money or I'll break your neck for you."

His two hands closed around her long, white throat. Strangling, struggling, she ripped the delicate gold links of her shoulder band. The veins swelled we wiolet whipcords under the tightening pressure of his long fingers. Her darkened eyelids widened in terror, her knees gave way beneath her, and she fell back on the couch as two quick, insistent knocks came on the door in the hallway.

Bacharach loosened his hold, recognizing the familiar signal. In silence the two looked at each other, united for the moment against their common enemy. He stepped back into the shadows of the bedroom as she caught at a silk scarf over the back of a chair and wound it about her bruised throat. When Lopez entered the room, not one detail of her disarray escaped his scrutiny, not even the torn, jeweled shoulder band.

"You entertain?" he said shrewdly.

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"I have a few friends to-night—Dr. Cavalho, Carmela Cornejo, Hernando—"

He interrupted her briefly.

"I shall not detain you. I will pay you for the Rolland formula. I have changed my mind." He drew from his pocket his check book and pen. She watched him craftily, recovering her

"Why you change your mind so quickly, sweetheart?" she asked with indolent indifference to his mood. "I am not interested to-night."

"I will double what I offered you."

"It is not enough. See? I have changed my mind, too. I will not sell. Anyway, maybe I cannot sell it to you. When you call me a cheat and a liar, and say it is worthless, then maybe I throw it in the fire. Why not? It is

no good."

"You are stupid to lie to me," he returned coolly. "I know you are prepared to leave here to-night with Bacharach. I have known all along that he was your lover and spy. You will not find him a permanent traveling companion, my dear. He is wanted by the police from Paris to Calcutta. He is a confidence man, a thief." At the slight sound behind him, Lopez wheeled, revolver leveled, his teeth bared in a smile of delighted satisfaction. In the doorway of the bedroom stood Bacharach, white, disheveled, his face bearing the marks of La Quesada's pink-tipped nails. Curses broke from his lips, for the woman who watched Lopez with fascinated gaze.

"You call me a thief. She sold the formula to-night to Talbot Palmer. She's gypped us both and has the cash."

As the words left his lips Lopez laughed, tossing the revolver on the decorated table where it lay among the ferns and flowers.

"There are many ways to coax a snake out of his hole. Now we get perhaps the truth, eh, my dear?" Before he guessed her intent, La Quesada had darted past him to the table. Another moment and a shot rang out in the amber-shaded room, heavy with perfume. The parrots and cockatoo let out a raucous outcry of high-pitched calls. Bacharach pitched forward in the doorway, face downward. his arms outflung like a drowning man, clutching at the crumpled rug, then suddenly relaxing limply.

She stood with the revolver in her hand, hate and contempt blazing in her eyes. Lopez lighted a cigarette.

"Very thoughtless, my dear," he remarked. "The New York police are not like Paris. You did not need to shoot him in order to convince me that you adore me. I quite believe it. I forgive you anything but stupidity. It was stupid of you to sell this thing to Palmer. You did not ask yourself why he wanted it? In your haste and greed you gave it to him, for Yetive Rolland."

There came the sound of hurrying steps up the outer flight of stairs from the street. She threw the revolver over beside the prostrate figure, carelessly.

"Tell them he do it for love of me," she said and waited with bored indifference over by the open window, fanning herself languidly, as Lopez opened the door. Brushing by him like some wild, shy creature of the night, Yetive knelt by the figure on the rug. There was not the slightest doubt in her own mind but what it was Talbot. A surging terror, sickening self-accusation, swept over her, and she broke into deep, dry sobs. Lopez smiled down at her.

"It is a pity to ruin so artistic and sincere a grief, my very beautiful one," he said gently. "But it is my unhappy duty to inform you that this is Leon Bacharach, not your Talbot Palmer."

"But Mr. Palmer was here?" Yetive glanced at the woman suspiciously. La Quesada shrugged her shoulders.

"Maybe. Why you come here to my apartment like this? If you send your

friend to buy from me the paper, why do you follow with Lopez? You want to frame me to him to betray me, to show me up, to make him hate me?" She turned to Lopez suddenly, "You call me stupid. You tell me I only have half the formula. You think you have been sold out because I let this man buy it from me. I tell you she has the other half."

The door opened showing the face of Luiz. He spoke in a hurried, hushed whisper. Would the senor come downstairs at once? The police were there. They had been told nobody was hurt, but it needed authority to satisfy them. Lopez calmly removed the key from the inside of the door and placed it on the outside.

"If you make a disturbance, you will be arrested," he said quietly. came the turn of the key in the lock, his footsteps down the uncarpeted stairs. Yetive's mind flashed from one possibility of escape to another, but walking slowly back and forth the length of the room was La Quesada, with her inscrutable, dangerous eyes. She talked in a hushed voice between set teeth, in

broken sentences. "You dare to come here and make trouble for me with Lopez. I know perfectly well who you are. I know all about what you do on the Caronia; how you dance and play around with him to try and get this away from him. do not know that I have it from your brother, your poor little foolish brother who adore me. You do not know that Lopez love and trust me to do this for him. You think he is in love with you because he dance with you and talk, talk, talk. Do I not know his ways with women? Now you shall give me your own part of the formula. This is a fine joke, is it not? The Senor Talbot think he has so much, and it is no good at all without what you have. You will give it to me, or I will strip you and search you here in this room. I will

kill you if I have to, but I will get that for Lopez. You shall not trick him or me again."

Yetive swung about as the woman approached, and reached the window.

La Quesada smiled.

"Open it; call out for help. I will swear that you shot Bacharach yourself. Listen, give me that paper, and I will help you to get away from Lopez. I swear that I will. I will give you back the money Palmer paid me if you will do this."

"No!" The word seemed wrenched from her lips. At all hazards, she felt she must not yield to this woman's There was the last chance that Palmer might have called up Mrs. Chilton and found that she had gone to dinner with Lopez. Before she could formulate a plan, the dancer flung herself upon her. It was like the attack of a tigress. She felt the hot, crushing grip of the long, white arms, the sharp pain from white teeth as she flung out one arm in defense. Yetive fought for life, but the South American was the stronger, her muscles trained into steel. She felt her strength weakening, her senses giving way. The long, silk scarf from La Quesada's throat was being used to bind her, when suddenly Bacharach's voice spoke. Lying half propped on one elbow, he leveled the revolver.

"Let her go!" The command came with amazing unexpectedness. dancer obeyed, staring at the man on the floor, whom she had thought dead, in speechless fascination. "There is a key to that door in my pocket." words came jerkily, painfully. "The right-hand vest one. Go upstairs and over the roof, Miss Rolland."

Yetive followed his directions in blind haste. The duplicate key she found in his pocket. It stuck in the lock when she tried to insert it, and the dancer laughed. He spoke to her in Spanish—a low threat that checked the

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Betty fell i old d first Норе Yetiv cheer soliu fathe speer on her lips and left her white and frozen, covered by his revolver as Yetive made her escape. The final instructions followed her.

"The roof to the left. The door is open there. You can reach the street

through it."

Obeying implicitly she found herself on the next street to the Bandolero. around the corner. Inconspicuous in her black dress, she walked until she caught a taxi, and gave the number of Mrs. Chilton's home to the driver.

Back in the amber-lighted room La Ouesada waited, smoking her favorite Cuban cigarette brand, smiling slightly as she sat with one elbow on her knee, one hand on her hip. Over the face of Bacharach there was flung carelessly a crimson-silk scarf, not so bright in color as the little line of red that trickled from the corner of his mouth.

CHAPTER XIV.

Two weeks later a wedding took place at Anne Brockway Chilton's home on Washington Square North, unexpected. but notable in its social exclusiveness. In the absence of her brother, Yetive Rolland was given in marriage to Talbot Palmer by Major Harry Powell. Slender, dark eyed, the striking resemblance of the bride to Marion Palmer, her bridesmaid, was remarked by the guests. Marion herself laughed over it.

"I know! Whimsical and marvelous, isn't it? Only she's a thousand times lovelier than I am; charm and personality plus, as Tolly told me once. he first met her? Oh, certainly, in Paris, when we were visiting Didi and Betty Picard, you know, yes? Tolly fell in love at that first glimpse, poor old darling. Followed her over on the first boat, and all that sort of thing. Hopeless. Nobody knew that she was Yetive Rolland, and now, observe and cheer! She has calmly handed over the solium formula to America as her father's gift without taking a cent for it. Can you imagine? Papers filled with her pictures and praises, and grand old

Tolly boy the happy man."

Major Powell listened with several others, his face a study in repression, his eyes watching Yetive as she descended the staircase in traveling dress. His own farewell was brief and cheerful, as he held her hand in his for a moment.

"Good-by, Justine. You're always that to me. I'm glad you're happy.'

"But-you did not kiss the bride?" Her eyes were shadowy with unshed tears for the moment as she saw the reproach in his own. He laughed and stepped back from her uplifted face.

"I'd rather not kiss the bride, if she'll forgive me," he said unsteadily. watched him gravely as he passed through the two long reception rooms out of sight. Talbot called to her from the doorway:

"Ready, dear?"

The car swung out under the Arch and up Fifth Avenue. The full glamour of the early autumn was in the air, a tangible, golden haze like delicate, windblown pollen. She bent her head forward to look out of the window away from the fire of his eyes. found no words, nothing that he had expected to say to her in the first moments when they would be alone together, man and wife. She broke the long silence herself, as his hand closed over her own.

"I was sorry for Major Powell." "So am I," replied Talbot cordially,

"Very fine chap!"

She shot a quick glance at his face.

"Silly!"

"Sorry for Lopez, too, I presume?" He smiled back at her. "He got off with a clean bill of health Saturday. Sailed for Argentina with La Quesada, the world-famous dancer. Quite an interview with the ship news men on her latest sensation.'

"You mean Captain Bacharach?" Yetive shuddered involuntarily, and leaned closer to him. The full horror of that night returned to her vividly. "You will never know how I felt when I went into that room and thought it was you lying there."

His arm tightened around her.

"Beloved! Fearless and keen. You know you had no business dashing into that place, you crazy little fool."

"I thought you were in there. I heard the shot and that was all. I had to go after you." She said it simply, with latent tragedy in her eyes, remembering all she had faced beyond the painted doorway.

"You know, Yetive," he said presently, "you mustn't mind my saying this. It's always stuck in my mind. I've wanted to ask you and I didn't dare."

"So you wait until you are quite safe," she accused.

He laughed down at her.

"Perhaps! I want to know why you ever went to Lopez that night to dine with him at his hotel."

"Oh!" She thought for a minute. "That night at dinner! You would never understand in one million years, not if I kept telling you all the time why I did it. First, I had a second message from Romlen, telling me positively that Lopez and La Quesada were sailing the next morning for South America. That made me suspicious at once for fear she was not telling you the truth, that she had already given the formula over to Lopez, and they would get you into some sort of trap. And also, I did not trust her."

"You mean you did not trust me."

"Oh, not that. You would not have been to blame so much. She was really very wonderful. She was all the siren and beautiful witches in one. When I saw the man who I thought was you lying there on her floor, I thought—ca, I thought everything had come true; that you had gone there and that Lopez had found you together—perhaps she in your arms—and he had shot you."

"Then the real reason why you went to the Bandolero was because you believed I was there in some beautiful danger that you could save me from. You believed that I had fallen down on my promise to you. You had no faith at all in me."

Her hand was pressed softly, firmly over his lips.

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"You crush out the sunlight when you say such things to-day," she said. "Let us be glad that I was wrong. Remember the moment when I reached Mrs. Chilton's and you were there, waiting for me."

"Have I ever thoroughly and carefully told you in detail just how I felt when I got there with the formula and found you had vanished again?"

"Tell me a hundred years from today," she laughed. "Two days here in New York, and then back to Paris. Oh, my husband, love, it is different from that voyage we took together last time, is it not?"

In spite of the traffic flow on their left, Talbot kissed her before she moved out of reach. Presently the car paused before his home. Here there was no one to eye them or annoy. In the glass vestibule Talbot waited, his eyes full of happiness and teasing.

"I think you have the key, dear," he said carelessly.

THE END.



THE ways of the pretentious are devious and none more so than that of certain women who attended the royal courts in London recently. In order to put on a brilliant front they hired the jewels which they wore before royalty.

The Lovable Goat

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton Author of "Beauty and the Feast," "The Holly Day," etc.



THE Parkers had gone on a weekend motor trip, and in the kitchen the household drudge was picking a chicken. The drudge was not a maiden of uncertain years with wispy hair and sharp elbows, but was the good-looking "Scuffs" Lankford, bachelor brother of Barbara Parker, erstwhile cartoonist, and temporary occupant of the Parker

A temporary roof often means no permanent abiding place. The attic of a brother-in-law means that "in-the-dishnan look" which a family excrescence cannot avoid-so long as maids are ephemeral, chickens have feathers, and kindred are addicted to an unconscious rubbing it in by going off on motor trips in a sedan just large enough for themselves. Not that Scuffs bore any grudge against the Parkers for enjoying their car. He hadn't a grudge bone in his body. Too, Barbara had taken him in on a night when, with a foot frozen from exposure, and the heart of him congealed, he'd crawled into the living room and toppled over before an open fire-a young cartoon monger gone broke, knocked flat by losing the girl he wanted. Oliver, his brother-in-law, had run him up a shed in which to stencil and paint the town's automobiles. His niece, "Peaches," had confiscated him for escort when the boys got the "gumps." How could he be anything but fond of his people?

Scuffs tentatively regarded chicken. It had yet to be drawn. The job required aplomb and a degree of haste. He adjusted the pantry apron that struck him about the middle, and tackled the interior decorations of the fowl. He was engaged with the heart and liver when an automobile horn sounded out front. Coming at a delicate moment, the horn spoiled a nice operation. He ignored a repetition of the summons to the driveway. And there came such a blast that it seemed as if a furious angel trumpeted without! He plunged his hands under a spigot.

But before he had taken off the apron. a hooded green roadster came dashing around the drive and achieved a short stop at the kitchen door, with no cessa-

tion of the horn.

Scuffs opened the door.

A girl at the wheel, whom he had never seen before, left off sounding the horn to stare at his artistic length in the apron smeared with the gore of to-morrow's roast.

"Maids are scarce—but so are men," she said, mitigating the remark with a

look of frank admiration.

Scuffs reddened. But he spoke without rancor, and with the slowed enunciation that had hung to him since his foot and heart were frozen:

"Back-door callers are no less scarce."

She threw him a quick look.

"Been ill?"

"Hurt, some years ago," was his laconic reply.

She had no regard for formalities.

"By a woman?"

Scuffs Lankford looked upon her without affront.

"Who else?" he said-of the past. From a dog basket slung to the roadster, a Boston bull terrier came up the back steps as if sure of a welcome. He went around the Lankford legs into the well-equipped kitchen.

The girl stepped from under the green hood, and pulled out an overnight bag. She wore motor breeches stuffed into shining boots, a red sweater, and buckskin gloves.

"I'm Patricia; Pat for short," she announced. "I chummed in with Peaches at finishing school. Where is she?"

Scuffs went down the kitchen steps, carefully because of a limp in the foot that still bothered him. He took her hap.

"They've all gone off for the weekend. I'm the only one home."

"Can I believe such luck?" she laughed, taking off her cap and shaking back a crop of blond hair.

She was no older than Peaches, road tanned, not well mannered; as little concerned at the absence of a hostess as some cocky young boxer stopping overnight for a champion game. Scuffs wished that the womenfolk were at home. With the modern girls all behaving like little toughs of the road—and with overmuch credulity toward her sex in his frozen past—it behooved him to reflect that any trickster might pass herself off as a chum of Peaches, with an eye on the absent family's silver!

Scuffs, as temporary keeper of his sister's house—and self-obliterated gentleman—opened the battered traveling bag in his hands. He saw nothing more alarming than sundry folded dainties and a kit of toilet tools. He looked up and met eyes that burglarized his sense of breeding.

"Who are you? A sort of upper

servant?"
Scuffs glanced at his attic windows.

"You've said it," he smiled. "I'm a relation, on his uppers."

Her look quizzed him, from his wellbrushed hair to his cracked but polished shoes. "When you put your foot forward, by poking into a visitor's bag, you should be shod in patent leather, Jeems!" She broke into frank laughter.

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"I beg your pardon—sincerely."
Scuffs closed her bag. "But my name isn't James. It's Scuffs Lankford."
Her hand went out to him.

"I've heard dad speak of you! He's Jan Getty, the advertising wizard. I've heard him say: 'Where's that brilliant young Lankford—since Diane Norton threw him over?'"

Scuffs was unprepared for a gust of emotion, as he stood with a guest bag in his hand. In the days when he'd plied his brushes with more artistry than now. he had known and liked Jan Getty. Young Lankford had been a meteoric success, landing too early on the thin ice of popularity. Diane, and his little conquered world, had made much of him until he presumed to ask much of them. Diane and his world had watched his dizzy fall; watched him fail, and stagger, and go cracked for a while. And now this girl was telling him that Jan Getty had said, "Where's that brilliant young Lankford?" He could have blubbered, in his shame: "Picking chickens, kind sir!"

He limped up the steps and opened the door for her.

And he laughed, with tears near his eyes. For her terrier had preëmpted the chicken as his own, and was making a lively meal of it on the linoleum of the kitchen floor!

The girl sped to rescue her dog from overeating.

"That healthy appetite, Beano, stamps us as week-end thieves." She tied Beano to the thong of her bag, where he sat with ear a-cock.

Scuffs cleared up the débris of chicken bones. His guest restively toured the kitchen. Coming upon a lemonmeringue pie, she followed the bad example of Beano in pillaging the pantry. Scuffs had not before seen a girl who

could eat a lemon pie like a boy, and get away with it. He stood watching her for a minute; before setting about the preparation of a meal, as naturally as if he hadn't at one time made half the world chuckle over his cartoons and his vivid color contributions to the art of advertising.

Along with a knack of adjusting his lean height and agreeable personality to a home not his own, Scuffs had an aptitude—Heaven help him!—for culinary art. He had baked the lemon pie that the pillager was demolishing. There was also at the moment a succulent ham, crusted with vinegar and brown sugar and studded with cloves, cooking in the upper oven of the electric range. A lower oven emitted pungent smells from candied sweet potatoes and cauliflower creamed with cheese. He knocked together some biscuits while the girl sat and looked at him.

With the garnishing of the ham, she declined an offer of the guest-room mirror and effected a motor-hardened toilet at the sink; scrubbing her face and hands, giving her hair a "stay-flat" combing, and dusting her piquant face with a Java powder that seemed to have caught the glow of wind and sun.

Scuffs had laid the table for two in the dining room. He drew out a chair for her, and took his own.

He carved the ham and served the vegetables,

She handled her fork with grace.

"When company comes unexpectedly, you aren't ready with refrigeration," she said of the very good food.

"The Parkers set a plentiful table." gravely replied Scuffs.

Dinner was interrupted by a neighbor, Elias Busby, who wanted his new car monogrammed by Lankford. Being something of a gossip, Busby looked over his nose glasses at the girl in a red sweater who was feeding a terrier from one of Barbara Parker's rose-cut dishes. Everybody knew that the Parkers were

on a week-end trip! Saying that he would call at a more opportune time, Busby withdrew.

The girl took out a penknife and etched on the tablecloth a caricature of Busby about to spread a spicy bit of scandal through the town.

"Mustard, please!" she laughed.

Scuffs turned her tracery, with the prong of a fork, into Beano on the search for chicken. She stared at the talented fingers executing strokes that made her close her penknife, with a sobered snap. Then she stooped and picked up her dog.

"Where do I bunk?" she asked briefly. Scuffs preceded her up some stairs that led from the dining room to three charming bedrooms, one of which was the guest chamber, with the latest cut in bobbed window curtains, a satin bed set, a lamp in the form of a dancer, an ivoryhued dressing table, and a chair piled with cushions of lace.

The guest put a thumb into each pocket of her sweater.

"It's white! It's sudsy! It floats!" was her comment on the room that was the pride of Peaches' life.

Scuffs set down her bag.

"I sleep in the loft," he said casually.
"But you needn't be nervous about burglars. Beano is the first chicken thief we've had. Good night; pleasant dreams."

She frowned.

"The loft? Why do you stall there?"
"I do some drawing now and then,"
he said, flushing. "Artists get cranky
unless they can occasionally bump their
heads against rafters."

"That's the first bluff you've pulled on me." Her expressive mouth curled in scorn. "Good night, brilliant cook."

Scuffs turned away.

"Good night," he said civilly.

He went downstairs, where the little job of clearing the table awaited him. He had fallen into a habit of scraping the platters clean, because Peaches was apt to come to dinner ready for a dance, Barbara was justly proud of her matronly hands, and Oliver knew more about the dollar mark than the dish pan. To-night, Scuffs stood looking at the table a full minute before he tackled the unsavory job.

He had washed the dishes and was putting away the flat silver when he became aware of being observed again by the week-end guest. She had changed, to his surprise, from red sweater to his own shabby smoking robe, that always hung on a certain nail in the rafters.

Her attitude toward his occupation was unflattering.

"You seem to have a variety of tasks. You're a perfect relish!"

Scuffs put the spoons into their com-

"Where did you get my robe from?" he asked, with recurrent doubt of her. "The garret," she replied.

She threw a cursory glance up the stairs. Her eyes came back to him, with a brightness that made her dimple to beauty.

"I don't want to miss anything in life, from cellar to attic. So I've moved my bag and Beano aloft. And I've brought down to the guest room your brushes and combs—do you always keep them in such a straight line?"

He sorted the forks.

"Won't it be difficult to explain to Peaches why you prefer my beams to tasteful wall paper?"

His tall figure bending over the service drawer angered her.

"Do you always put the silver away so carefully, Jeems?" she taunted. She turned and went up the stairs, thumping them all the way to the attic.

Scuffs locked the drawer of silverware and put the key in his pocket. The cool effrontery of this girl, who didn't care much what she said to him, and who had made Elias Busby stare at her over his glasses, might arise from her being more used to garrets than decent sleeping quarters! After closing the house for the night, Scuffs divested himself of coat and shoes, to compose his long limbs on a couch in the dining room.

He went to sleep thinking of the family silver.

But if he entertained any thought of being aroused by a pistol at his temple and a demand for the key to Barbara's spoons, the idea was dispelled by the broad light of Sunday morning. He sat up; the breakfast table was laid with the flat silver; the key had been removed from his pocket, and was in the buffet drawer.

"Up, serf!" Peaches' guest looked in on him from the kitchen with an omelet turner in her hand, her hair a blond riot.

Scuffs got to his feet and made her a bow.

"What have we in the scullery?" be ejaculated. In good spirits, hardly limping, he went up the stairs for his morning plunge.

By the time he had tubbed and shaved, she was berating him from below:

"There's no inspiration in a flat omelet. Come on down. No other cook can get such flavor in pancakes!"

He went down to the experience of eating omelet and pancakes with a pretty girl in a house surrounded by the quietude of Sunday morning in an uneventful town. During breakfast Scuffs thought a good many thoughts that had for years been strangers to him, and Diane receded into the background of his mind. Pat's eyes met and held his.

They left the breakfast table to go for a long hike. In the tramp through tree-lined streets and encompassing hills, they talked of the places each had seen—he with the sober twinkle of a cartoonist—she with the straight slant of a modern girl. Scuffs had some of the old verve, as he swung into the street that had been his refuge from youth's first destructive raptures.

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But when he saw, by the sedan on the drive, that the week-end motorists were home again, there wormed up in him like the turning of a corkscrew, a realization that the breakfast table hadn't been cleared, and no preparations had been made for dinner! He laughed; and took his comrade in truancy by the arm.

She freed her arm.

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"Use your own muscle for the cleanup, friend." She fell a step behind him.

Scuffs knew that she missed none of the intimate "jawing" that greeted his appearance. Barbara was astonished to find her table in a mess! Peaches had her mouth set for baked chicken! Oliver wanted to know whose roadster had been left at the back door! The Parkers vented reactionary tempers from family jaunt on the lovable goat who had nowhere to sleep but their attic. Midway, Peaches discovered her guest, and stood aghast:

"Patricia Getty! Pat!"

In a flutter of golden hair and chiffons, Peaches introduced her best pal to her parents, and to her uncle.

The prescribed civilities were exchanged. Pat escaped somewhere aloft. And Scuffs was dragged aside by Peaches, who wailed in his ear that the Gettys had a butler and uniformed maids, and a French chef. What in the name of all poverty had he given Patricia to eat? What had she thought of the guest room? In a breath, Peaches described the Getty menage, decried the Parker establishment, and reached for the telephone to rally her gang and give Pat a good time. Barbara begged Scuffs to lay a fire in the living room, and sped away to borrow the Busbys' maid.

Scuffs put off building the fire. He went upstairs to his attic. Having come to know Pat Getty uncommonly well in a week-end free of ceremony, he knew that he'd find her sulking with Beano under rafters that had given his head divers bumps when he walked too far

in any direction.

Pat immediately sensed his mission.

"Beat it, like a whipped egg," she said inelegantly. "I'm going to stay put up here."

"But why?" he asked, with a hand on an unplaned upright to which his shaving mirror was fastened.

"I'm looking over your attic pictures," answered Jan Getty's daughter. She had a number of his sketches on her knees.

Scuffs leaned down and took the sketches from her, his face shadowed.

"Junk," he said.

"Blow your own horn," she retorted; "if you don't, nobody gives a toot for you." With her penknife, she began to carve letters in a post of his bed, her blond forelock falling over her eyes.

"Your work is corking."

He looked at some of his color-andcharcoal work thumb-tacked to the uprights, and at his drawing board tilted in the northern light from dormer win-He looked about his quarters. The sagging bed had once been a gallant four-poster, the rug was a faded blend of browns and blues, the old leather chair had a springless seat, the chest of drawers had no rollers. At all sides of the restricted area he called his own, the rafters sloped to dusty spaces crammed with broken furniture, boxes of disused books, trunks, roped mattresses, stringless musical instruments, scratched graphophone records, empty picture frames.

He looked again at the usurper of his holdings, who had an arm about her

dog.

"Can't I appeal to your sense of propriety?" he said. "Please come down to the guest room."

Pat did not reply. She opened her dog's mouth and took a wad of wet pa-

per from his jowls.

"He likes raw chicken better than pasteboard. If you miss a photograph, here it is—he can't quite swallow it."

Scuffs limped over to his chest of drawers. He pulled open the top one,

and found that his only photograph of Diane Norton was gone!

He turned on Peaches' guest.

"Have you rummaged in my personal effects?"

"Zowie!" she exclaimed, though somewhat abashed. "You're much better looking when you're mad." She extracted another pulpy wad from her dog's jaws. "Of all things to go keen on, Beano—attic rubbish." Her cool effrontery was youth's own disregard of property rights.

Scuffs gathered up her belongings and

put them into her bag.

"I'm going to carry you downstairs."
With his free arm he made a scoop of
Pat.

She did the unexpected thing of putting her unruly head on his shoulder.

"Don't make the journey too fast."

He bore her in no tender manner
down the attic flight, Beano growling in
the rear. In the guest room he dumped

her onto the satin bedspread.

"There's a thrill in every bounce!"
she laughed. Then she propped her elbows on a satin pillow, and stormed very

youthfully: "I'll pay you up for this, aërial cave man!"

He walked out, his pulses throbbing. He went on down the stairs, and laid the fire. The Busby maid was setting a company table. Peaches, in running off to dress for the crowd coming in later, asked her obliging uncle to open the graphophone, dust the jazz records, and throw phosphorus flakes on the fire to make it burn like driftwood. Performing these parlor duties, Scuffs grimly wondered if Pat would come down to fork oysters and dance in red sweater and muddied boots!

The Pat who came down a half hour later gave him a new slant on a modern daughter of the rich. She had unearthed from her overnight bag a rose-colored crape with petal draperies, nude stockings, and silver slippers. Her hair was glossy and decorous. Throughout din-

ner her behavior was charming. Ste talked with Barbara of the latest fashions, with a dash of finance for Oliver, and scraps of movie gossip for Peaches, who was wild about the screen. This perfection of manner was maintained by Pat after dinner, when the doors of the dining room were closed for the clearing of the table, and Peaches' gang arrived, in flivvers, big cars, and dancing pumps.

The jazzing youngsters soon drove Scuffs up to his lair under the roof.

At his drawing board, he tried to retrieve his loss of Diane's photograph by putting her face—the face he had worshiped-on paper. He found, in slow horror, that his fingers only caricatured remembrance! So he drew a grim semblance of himself as automobile painter and household helper. And he made a sketch of Jan Getty, a man with shrewd eyes, and shoulders as full of vim as the advertising agencies he controlled Below, Peaches took her crowd off somewhere; they were never long in one place. Sunk into the hollowed seat of his chair. Scuffs crossed his arms on his drawing board and put his head down on them. He thought, almost impersonally: "Where's that brilliant Lankford? Badly off, kind sir. Painting other men's cars. Fallen afoul of his fortunes—a cook. Oh, Diane! I couldn't have you, and you were the sun and the moon to me. I might as well flop, Diane. I might as well-

Haunted by the face that eluded his pencil, he did not heed a noise at his dormer windows. The electric bulb that lighted his garret went suddenly out!

Scuffs lifted his head.

He had a glimpse in the moonlight of several husky figures, hooded in white, and with dancing pumps on their feet. He reared to his lean height. The invaders fell upon him. One pinioned his arms from behind, another gagged him with the handkerchief-ball trick, another cut off his vision by dragging a white slip down over his head. With incal-

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As rapidly, he was hoisted to one of the windows and let down by a length of rope to the ground, where other hands received him, ran him somewhere, and thrust him into an automobile. The car made a violent start. It took the road at such speed that Scuffs was precipitated against the steering wheel, like a lag of screenings!

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He managed to attain a sitting posture by a series of persistent wriggles. Wrenches that left his wrists raw loosened his hands. But the effort that finally freed them flung him against the car door, which gave way, and his neck was saved by a bang of the flapping panel. He worked out of the rope, got the gag from his mouth, and the white sack off his head.

He found himself sitting on the floor of the hooded green roadster, with Pat Getty at the wheel.

"Kidnaped," Pat told him, her blond thatch blowing under the visor of her cap, "by the Cluck Clucks, a clan formed to-night with the boys I met, to make their first and last crusade against cruelty to baby chickens. They did their work well!"

Scuffs took the seat beside her, and the wheel in his hands, over hers.

"No, you don't!" she cried, managing to pass a place where the car might have been turned about.

"Yes, I do," said Scuffs, getting control at a fork of the road. He made a turn that nearly upset the car, somehow gave them an exchange of seats, and cracked her knuckles on the wheel.

"Ouch!" Pat drew back in the shadow of the hood and nursed her knuckles, injured.

He drove on. But he slowed down presently, for, having made the first part of the ride with his head in a sack, he found it difficult to locate the road. He peered out for a landmark.

Pat revived.

"Are you lost?" And she gave her cap a tug. "If you'd had the gumption to go on, we'd have hit a town with a famous marrying parson."

His heart stopped and then pounded on heavily. He spoke as he might have to Peaches:

"If you'd any sense at all, you would go on to Atlantic City and meet your father. Girls should be leashed, nowadays."

"Cream it!" she voiced. "Why should you object to being kidnaped by a rich girl? You don't seem to mind free shines for your shoes. If I married you, I'd probably coax a villa on the Riviera from dad. Couldn't you swallow that as easily as servant quarters at the Parkers'?"

He had learned how to keep his temper when insulted, but the blood stung his face.

"Did you bully Peaches' friends into carrying me off to make me a proposal of marriage?"

"A free offer," replied Pat.

She threw back her blowing hair. "Maybe you don't know that I've had your photograph for a year, traded off Peaches for a picture of a movie idol." She thrust out a hand to him. "Oh, come on! Take a sporting chance. Let's marry. If we don't like it, we

needn't stay put."
Scuffs gave her back her hand.

"My dear Pat, that's bunk. You do stay put."

He recognized a mileage sign, and took an upgrade that he knew. "That's why Diane wouldn't marry a poor cartoonist," he gravely confided to the girl beside him. "She didn't want to stay put with poverty."

Pat's gesture threw his former beloved into the discard.

"Why should that put you down to pots and pans?"

Scuffs spoke slowly. "It wasn't just that."

"Was it a run of hard luck all

around?" She struck her knuckles together. "Couldn't you buck up? Don't you know that life's three fifths rough and wrong?"

"Life," he said wearily, "sometimes hammers a man so thoroughly that he doesn't care to pull himself together."

"So he tries peach sauce for breakfast and stewed figs for dinner—at another man's table," she nodded.

Scuffs agreed.

"Who cares?"

She turned her head with the bright look that lent her beauty.

"Do you want me to bawl to your town that I do?"

"Do you?" he said.

"Yes."

"Thank you," said Scuffs, from his heart.

His slowed enunciation was evident again:

"It's only a case of lovelornity with you, over a species you've probably never seen before, nor will again, I hope. Do me a favor, Pat. Go. Let me alone."

A thundercloud on her face eclipsed its beauty.

"Are you giving me the bounce—flat?"

"I'm afraid that I am," said Scuffs. She turned her thumbs down.

"Do you think you can escape me? I'm rich, attic man. You're poor."

He said, unperturbed: "Are you threatening me?"

"What if I am?" she cried fiercely.
"The salt that burns your lips is not good salt—you've pepper in you."

He threw back his head and laughed. "You have," said Pat.

He took the curve of the Parker driveway.

The family was still up, with Peaches glued to a front window. Scuffs stopped the roadster and got from it, holding out his hand to assist Pat in alighting.

She shifted to her wheel.

"I'm going. But I'll get you yet. If I have to hound your every relation from you, and leave you tottering without a roof!" She squared her alm shoulders. "Come on, Beano!"

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She took the circle of the driveway and was gone, in the darkness just before dawn.

Scuffs stood looking after the tail

He turned to the house, as the door was opened by Peaches. He was dragged in, under a shower of questions. Did he know how late it was? Why had Patricia gone? Where had she gone, after staying out all night with him? Peaches was in tears. Barbara, with an edge to her tone, begged her brother to make them all some coffee. She sat down to write what explanation she could of the week-end affair to Jan Getty.

Knowing that no reply was expected of him, or would be very pleasantly received, Scuffs made the coffee.

As it was nearly day, he got out of the house and went to his paint shop; where he set to work scraping varnish from a couple of motor trucks. He selected his stenciling tools for the work that Elias Busby wanted done on his new car.

But the Busby car was not brought to Scuffs' shop. And the commissions that had come his way, because he was a likable fellow and Barbara Parker's brother, fell off. Busby's chance sight of Scuffs entertaining Patricia Getty in the absence of his sister had turned public sentiment against the artist who had wandered in with a frozen foot, and who painted automobiles with a skill beyond mechanical work. His kidnaping by the town tadpoles leaked out. Every time that he walked down the main street, Scuffs felt himself kicked into caricature!

In contrast to the empty paint shop, the Parkers came in for a streak of luck Good fortune fell upon them.

From a set of banking directors across the continent there came to Oliver an offer of a secretaryship in a California corporation. The family debate over whether to go was settled by a telegram to Peaches. A movie director, in speeding through her town at seventy on the level, had spied a perfect film face in the peaches-and-cream physiognomy of the Parkers' darling; would she come to Hollywood for a film try-out? Peaches went breathless. The removal of the family was expedited by a telephone call for Barbara from a realtor. Would she consider renting the house furnished? He had a good-paying tenant for immediate occupancy. Money, fame, travel! The Parkers speedily prepared to transport themselves to the State of sun-kissed fruit-California.

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Scuffs was useful, in the flurry of departure. He put through the farewell party given by Peaches, done up to resemble any star of the screen. He made coffee for the oyster roasts given by his brother-in-law to some cronies. He filled in at the last bridge party that Barbara held. He was general valet. He saw to the railroad accommodations.

He gathered half the town at the station. And his handkerchief waved the longest, as the train carried his people into a golden limbo.

Scuffs went back to the house.

He knotted an apron about his middle, tied his handsome head in a dust cloth, and used broom and suction sweeper in making the place ready for the tenant who would take possession at once. He stowed in the corners of the attic his leather chair, faded rug, chest of drawers, and four-poster. The taking down of his bed gave him pause. Not only because of some letters carved on one of the posts: "Blow your own horn.—P. G." But because, at the moment, there sounded in front of the house a horn whose prolonged honking sent a rush of color to his face.

He grimly put away the bedpost, with the broken furniture under the eaves. The horn without was blown again. Scuffs took from a rafter clothesline some socks that he had washed, and put them into his grip, closing it. After an orgy of blowing the automobile siren was silent. Footsteps and voices in the house made him think that he had mistaken the personality of the brazen horn—the tenant was probably here. Scuffs put his overcoat on his arm and picked up his grip and portfolios.

Up the attic stairs came Pat Getty, followed by her terrier, two youths of the town, and the meekest of local parsons. She was in a rig of green yarn, hat, scarf, sweater, skirt, and rolled stockings to match, with a swagger stick hung by a twist of yarn to her wrist.

Scuffs put down his portfolios.

She greeted him with a wave of her hand. Her first move was to seat her three companions on garret furniture, a good deal as witnesses might be boxed. The two young townsmen balanced their lusty bodies on a divan minus a leg. The parson gingerly accepted the edge of a cane-bottomed chair.

Pat took a sheet of Barbara Parker's stationery from her pocket, and consulted its closely written pages.

"This letter to my father states," she began, in a broadcasting voice, "that I didn't show up till dawn from a ride with Scuffs Lankford. My name has been compromised. I demand reparation. I come accompanied by witnesses and clergy." She made a cut through the air with her stick, and stepped over to Scuffs.

"Come on and marry me," she said, with a rush of tears in her eyes. "You can't bum out to nowhere." She took from her hat a marriage license and ring.

Scuffs felt his heart go to pieces over a finis that laid the last of his pride in the dust, and made his enunciation that of a very tired man. "If you want to bum out with me, come on," he said.

His impressions of the ceremony were of a wedding in caricature: the solemn faces pulled by the unconcerned witnesses, the gooseflesh on the parson's nose, the streak of motor oil on the small hand that he ringed, the background of cobwebs and domestic débris. Even the handshakes and exit of the town boys, and the fee thrust by the bride into the claw of the departing clerical, parodied a scene that must of necessity be paramount among his memories.

They were alone. Pat, more awkward than triumphant now, stooped and pulled her terrier's ears.

"No use cussin'," she said. Scuffs picked up his baggage.

"Now you're married, you must obey, Pat," he said simply. "I'm going to take you to your father, where you are to stay put until I come for you. You can't bum out with me. I haven't a roof to cover you."

She came erect, youthfully switching

her knee with her stick.

"Yes, you have. I emptied this house of everybody but you. How else did you 'spose the Parkers got three offers in one day to try the California clime?"

She hung her hat on a nail and shook

back her tumbled, blond hair.

"We've a roof. I'm the tenant here. The lease was dad's premature wedding present."

"You'll live here alone," was the quiet

rejoinder.

"Not I!" She caught a quivering lip between her teeth. She took out another missive and gave it to him, in the coming dark.

Scuffs stooped near the dormer win-

dows, to read a letter. He read it twice. It was from Jan Getty, asking him to supply his art department with work for two years, and at the expiration of that time to assume the management of the department in the main offices. Scuffe folded the letter with fingers shaken by its purport. He had put up the shutters and turned off the power in a game that viewed in the dispassionate light of experience, was a series of knockouts with ultimate winnings to the fighter ready to get back into the skirmish. Here was a passport back to activity. Scuffs could have cried aloud: "Kind sir!" His hands and shoulders were unsteaded by the tears through which men sometimes find their courage. He opened his cont and put the letter into an inner pocket.

But when he looked at Pat, when he saw that she understood the painful process of thawing out that was flooding his veins and pumping fresh blood to his heart, he took a backward stepfrom the habit he had formed of damning his personality in a sphere not his

own

His step backward was not propitious. He was too tall for the rafters, and he gave his head an unmerciful whack!

Pat cried out. She came running to him. She drew his head down, and located with anguished fingers the spot where the rafters had struck. He caught the solacing fingers in his, and swung his wife to his shoulder. She kissed his hair. He put up a hand to steady her, and had the hand flung wide in quick disregard of fear, and had the hand caught back and buried on her heart.

He carried her down to the house that was swept and garnished for its new tenants.

THE death of the English royal hairdresser brings to light the generosity of Edward, and his successor George, King of England. The quiet little hairdresser left a fortune of a quarter of a million dollars, which even his daughters, who are his heirs, did not suspect he owned. Surely he was a rare exception to the usual ioquacious barber.

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The Perils and Pitfalls

By Joseph C. Lincoln Author of "Mr. Pratt," "Cap'n Eri," etc.

THE morning train from the Cape roared into the great South Station at Boston, and the passengers crowded out upon the platforms.

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There were drummers and business men, storekeepers coming to buy goods, matrons and country maidens on shopping trips, clerks back from vacations, and summer girls and summer boarders galore.

Also, there was Deacon Darius Bachelder, envoy extraordinary of the East Harniss Baptist Society, with the congregation's fund in his pocket and the congregation's trust embodied in his person, coming to town upon an errand of importance and realizing its importance to the fullest degree.

When the committee chose the deacon as the one person fitted by nature and occupation to go to Boston and buy the books and bookcase, the congregation unanimously approved the choice.

The books and bookcase aforementioned were to be presented by the faithful of the Baptist church to the Rev. Mr. Whyte, pastor of that little society, and his wife as tokens of love and esteem.

The occasion of their presentation was the tenth anniversary of the Rev. Whyte's call to the pastorate—a

great event. The gift, too, was to be an elaborate one—forty-two dollars and thirty-eight cents having been subscribed—and it was plain that the time demanded a great man. Obviously, Deacon Bachelder was the man of the hour.

The deacon was the only literary character, Parson Whyte excepted, among the two hundred and fourteen inhabitants of East Harniss. boasted a library of thirty-seven volumes, in which Plutarch's "Lives" and a dilapidated edition of the Waverly novels occupied positions of honor, and he passed generally for a man of parts Then, too, he was the and learning. local representative of the Cape Cod Item, and his lines written for that journal upon the occasion of the death of Captain Obed Pepper were still quoted by the relatives of the deceased. They began, "He sailed serene the seas of life; his keel ne'er struck the shoals of sin," and were originally in twenty-one stanzas, of which the jealous editor suppressed eighteen.

Add to these qualifications the facts that he boasted of never having tasted a drop of liquor in his life, that he never read the Boston papers because they contained the advertisements of brewers

and distillers, and that his talks in prayer meetings mainly consisted of tirades against the perils and pitfalls of the great cities, and the peculiar fitness of the deacon for his new position will be at once apparent. It may be added that Mr. Bachelder's present trip to the Massachusetts capital was his first in twelve years.

He followed the crowd through the mammoth station and passed out at the main entrance. The elevated railway was a new thing to him and he stopped to stare upward at it. The hurrying crowds and the tall buildings made him feel peculiarly strange and out of place, and for the first time the sense of his own importance, that had caused him to patronize the East Harniss friends who had seen him off, deserted him. The deacon looked a little bewildered and worried.

Perhaps this look was what caused the young man in the red-checked waistcoat and pink tie to come over and The young man had speak to him. been watching Mr. Bachelder ever since the latter left the train and had followed him out of the station. Now he rushed across the sidewalk and held out his

hand.

"Well!" he explained. "Who'd have thought of seein' you in these diggin's! How's things down on the Cape?'

The smile of the young man was so fascinating and the tones of his voice so sweetly smooth that the deacon was charmed at once. Incidentally, the stranger was dressed just as Darius had felt sure rich city men would dress. He took the proffered hand.

"Why, you've kinder got the best of my mem'ry," he said. "Yer face seems sorter familiar, but somehow I fergit

yer name, Mister-Mister-"

"Montgomery-Charlie Montgomery. I met you at Yarmouth one summer. You took me 'n' the girl out ridin'. I knew you in a minute. Why, say, Mr. Black, I---"

The deacon actually grinned. These city people weren't so sharp, after all.

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"Guess yer've got the wrong pig by the ear," he interrupted. "My name ain't Black, and I don't live in Yarmonth. I'm from East Harniss. Name's Back. elder."

It was actually pitiable to see the humiliation and distress of young Mr. Montgomery. He apologized so profusely for his mistake that Darius felt called upon to help him out of this trouble. He explained that there was no harm done, and that he was very glad to have made his acquaintance. anyway. This seemed to relieve the confused Charles, who brightened up at once and grew very communicative. He imparted so much of his personal history that the deacon reciprocated by telling the errand that had brought him to Boston.

"Books, eh?" ejaculated the delighted Mr. Montgomery. "Well, say! Talk about luck! Why, I've got a friend in the book line and he'll do anything for me. I can save you fifty per cent on any book you want to buy. Come right

along with me."

The deacon protested that he couldn't think of putting a stranger to so much trouble, but his companion waved aside all protestations and, catching him by the arm, hurried away to find the friend in the "book line." Apparently the latter's place of business was some distance off, for they had walked for half an hour, when Mr. Montgomery stopped before a shabby-looking drug store, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and exclaimed:

"Whew! Sufferin' cats, but it's hot! Le's go in here and have some soda."

Now soda was a drinkable against which Mr. Bachelder had no scruples, and he gladly followed his kind-hearted friend into the store. A dissipatedlooking clerk arose from his seat behind the soda fountain, tossed a cigarette stub under the counter, and, after bestowing a grin and nod upon Mr. Montgomery, inquired what his patrons would have.

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"Give us some sass'p'rilla, Tim," said the genial Charles. "Better take sass'p'rilla, Mr. Bachelder; nothin' like it for coolin' a guy off. Two of 'em, Tim." And Mr. Montgomery winked cheerfully yet deliberately.

There are certain drug stores, even in Boston, where a wink carries weight. The clerk drew two glasses of the sarsaparilla, retired behind the fountain for a moment, and came out again stirring the beverages with a spoon.

Well, here's happy days!" said Mr. Montgomery, poising his glass. The deacon smiled benignly and the sarsaparilla disappeared. It was good soda, there was no doubt about that. A little stronger, perhaps, than Darius had been in the habit of drinking, and with a flavor that was new to him, but good, and singularly exhilarating and comforting. He felt at peace with all the world and his benign smile became positively radiant.

"My, my! That's grateful!" he exclaimed. "Beats what we git down our way all ter nothin'. Let's have a couple more of 'em, mister. No, no!"—as Mr. Montgomery reached for his money—"this is my treat."

If the deacon had noticed the intent gaze with which the companionable young Boston gentleman regarded the old-fashioned wallet that he took from his pocket he might have been alarmed. He did not notice it, however, and the drug clerk drew the sodas, retired behind the fountain and reappeared, as before. The second supply of sarsaparilla went the way of the first. effect upon Mr. Bachelder was even more enlivening. He insisted upon shaking hands with the grinning Tim and inviting him to visit East Harniss.

Also, he endeavored to recall a humorous story he had heard some four or five years before. It was a complicated yarn, however, and before he could recollect its ending his friend had piloted him to the street. And then a queer thing happened.

A big Irish policeman suddenly appeared from around the corner and caught Mr. Montgomery, somewhat roughly, by the shoulder.

"Move right along, Reddy, me son," he said briskly. "I've had me eye on you for the last tin minutes. Niver mind yer frind, here; he'll go the other way. You 'n' me take a constitutional tooards the station."

"Aw, what the devil's the matter, Maloney?" demanded the indignant young gentleman. "I ain't done nothin'."

"I know yez ain't, not yit, and that's what I'm here fer. I don't intend yer shall. And now, ould sport," turning to the dazed Mr. Bachelder, "you throt along up that strate and don't make any more friends like him, understand? Come on, Reddy, till I inthroduce yer ter the sergeant."

Still protesting, Mr. Montgomery was led away by the policeman, leaving the deacon, between the sarsaparilla and astonishment, utterly befogged. Tim, the drug clerk, rapped on the window and beckoned.

"Was he pinched?" he inquired, when the deacon entered the store.

"Who? What?"

"Him—Reddy. Did Maloney pinch him?"

"He went away with the officer, young feller," said Darius, with dignity. "Officer" was a provokingly difficult word to pronounce. "Seemed ter be a friend of his."

"Hully gee!" muttered Tim. Then he grinned maliciously and added: "Have another sass'p'rilla?"

Well, it's a sad story. The rest of that day is still a troubled blank to Deacon Darius Bachelder of the East Harniss Baptist Church. He has an indistinct remembrance of encounters with

several insinuating gentlemen with prominent noses who invited him to come inside certain stores and buy something to "dake home ter de old laty."

The next thing he remembers-and that, like his other memories, is somewhat shadowy-is of walking into a long room where a crowd of men were standing at a counter and apparently drinking what may or may not have been sarsaparilla. He remembers that they laughed very much when he appeared; why, he didn't at the time understand.

Then one of the men left the others and hurried over to him and looked intently in his face. The deacon remembers now that he was not greatly aston-

ished to recognize Al Small.

Mr. Small had been at one time the "sport," and consequently the disgrace, of East Harniss. He then owned the only pool-and-billiard room in the village, and it was more than rumored that he bet on horse races, gambled occasionally, and had been known to tarry long at the wine cup. He and his habits had more than once formed the subjects of the deacon's discourse at Friday night prayer meeting. Small had eventually moved from East Harniss to Wareham, where-so the news had come to his old home-he was running a grocery store and doing well.

But, though the deacon may not have been astonished to meet Mr. Small, certain it was that Small was astonished to meet the deacon. He apparently could not believe his eyes and looked and

looked again.

"Hello, Al!" said Mr. Bachelder

solemnly.

Then Mr. Small went into a paroxysm of laughter. He laughed until he was obliged to lean against the door to recover his breath.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he roared. "wonders'll never stop! Darius Bachelder! Darius! And I thought I was

the only feller with the spunk of a man that ever lived in East Harniss! But ver can't tell. Git one of these reel old starchy chaps away from home and-Put 'er there, Darius!" he added, holding out his hand. "I'm free ter say that I never thought much of yer down on the Cape, but I see that you've always done what I've only had sense enough ter do lately; that is, be respectable where you're known and have your fun where you're a stranger. there!"

The deacon groped around for the extended hand and shook it feebly. He endeavored to make some fitting remark, but could think of nothing but "sass'p'rilla," and so said that. Small looked him over carefully.

"My, my! but you're in a state," he muttered. "Leave you alone and you'll be picked clean and end in the station Old friend of mine down house. home," he explained to the amused crowd. "Come up ter town on his annual time. I guess it's up ter me ter look after him. Here, you, Darius"taking the deacon by the arm and leading him to the back of the room-"you come with me."

If Mr. Bachelder had been in a condition to notice things about him, he might have thought the room to which Mr. Small now conducted him a curious place. It was up one flight of stairs and there were no less than three doors across the passage, each heavy and barred and having a peephole through which the initiated Al conversed with some person unseen. The room itself had no windows and was lit by gas. There were tables around which crowds of men were sitting or standing, and there was a constant whirring and clicking sound in the air, and some one was always mentioning the name of a color, black and red being the favorites. was also noticeable that a sharp-eyed, square-chinned man stood in the center of the room and when the conversation becan word. Mr chair. "T til I's

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became at all loud he checked it with a word.

Mr. Small conducted Darius to a

"There!" he said. "You set there until I'm ready to go. Don't you worry none; I'm goin' ter see yer through."

The deacon was only too willing to sit anywhere. The room was hot and the atmosphere oppressive. He fell asleep almost instantly, and in a most undignified heap. Some time thereafter he was aroused by a vigorous shaking.

"Hi, you! Wake up!" exclaimed Mr. Small, who was doing the shaking. "Lend me what money you've got with yer. I'll pay yer as soon as we git ter my hotel. Where's your pocket-book?"

The dazed Darius indicated his trousers pocket. Mr. Small pulled out the wallet, and began going over its contents.

"Here's your keys," he said; "better put them safe somewheres. I'll put 'em here. Yes, and your railroad ticket— I'll stick that in here so yer'll know where 'tis. There! Set still till I come."

With the wallet in his hand he darted back to the crowd from whence came the voices calling the names of the colors. The deacon, dazed and half awake, gazed about him uncomprehendingly. He had an indistinct notion that he was in church. Suddenly and at the top of his voice he struck up a hymn.

The men at the tables turned quickly, saw from whence the noise proceeded, and turned back again. Mr. Small was too excited and intent to turn at all. The sharp-eyed man in the center of the room held up his forefinger. A burly fellow came out of a corner, took the deacon by the arm, opened a side door, led him down a short flight of stairs, and pushed him out into the street. Then the burly man went back to the room.

Some time later Mr. Bogardus, who keeps the sailors' lodging house on Richmond Street, was surprised to see his friend, Patrolman Maloney, enter the office of the lodging house escorting a wretched and disreputable object. Collar awry, Sunday black coat covered with dust, and torn, Sunday tall hat battered and jammed down upon the ears, it was the veritable Mr. Hyde or Deacon Darius Bachelder, of the East Harniss Baptist Church.

"Bill," said Officer Maloney, "look at this, will yer? Ain't it a mortal shame? Begorra, I hadn't the heart ter run him in! And they've got every cint he had to his name, too. Here, Bill, give him a room and let him slape it off, and I'll pay the damage. Barrin' that his nose don't turn up enough on the ind, and that thim Galways of his ain't rid enough, he'd be the livin' image of me own ould grandfather over across. Thrate him tinderly, Billy, and God'll be good ter ye."

It was well into the forenoon of the next day when the deacon awoke. Awoke to find himself in bed in a strange house. Awoke with a headache and certain dim and horrible remembrances of the day before, that became but little more distinct as he dressed himself. It was while dressing that he discovered the loss of his pocketbook.

Mr. Bogardus would have been much more stony-hearted than it was his wont to be had he not felt sincere pity for the pale and trembling creature that tottered down the stairs and across the room to his desk. The deacon was in a condition of crushed and hopeless despair.

"Will you please tell me, mister," he begged humbly, "how I come to be here?"

"Maloney, the cop, lugged yer in here last night," replied the lodging-house keeper. "Yer needn't worry about the price of your room. It's all paid fer."

"Was-was I sick when I come here?"

"Well, some folks might call it bein' sick. You certainly was mighty bad."

"Had—had I been drinkin' liquor?"

"Had yer been drink— Why, say, pop! You're old enough ter know better. You take my advice and go straight home. Where d'yer live?"

Alas, for pride that leadeth to destruction! The deacon choked, gulped, and gave the name of a town but little distance from Boston.

"Oh, well! That ain't so bad," said the kind-hearted Bogardus. "Here's a dollar. Take it and buy yerself a ticket and don't stop nowheres on the way ter the depot. That's all right. Yer can send me the money after yer git home."

Darius took the dollar and stammered a feeble attempt at thanks. He put aside the questions that his curious host would fain have asked him and declined an invitation to breakfast. Eating just then was out of the question. He brushed his dilapidated hat, set his garments into some sort of order, and went out into the street.

Now the deacon, before his fall, had been a proud and self-confident man. Even now, as we have seen, some remnant of this pride still clung to him, and although he was acquainted with a few Boston people, principally those who visited East Harniss in the summer, he could not bring himself to go to them and beg for assistance. the rest of the day he aimlessly walked the streets, searching one pocket after the other in the desperate hope of finding a little money or, at least, his return ticket to the Cape. His keys, that had been in the missing wallet, he found in the breast pocket of his coat; how they got there he could not remember.

The same pride that prevented his calling upon acquaintances for help, kept him from appealing to the police. The story that he had to tell seemed so improbable and his recollections of the

previous day were so vague; that he doubted even his wife's acceptance of his unsubstantiated statements. Remembrance he had none as to the locality in which he had disgraced himself. Then with ever-increasing force would come upon him realization of the fact that he would be regarded in his own town as a drunkard and a third. He, the leader of the local Good Templars and pillar of the church!

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He spent that night in a ten-cent lodging house. Thirty cents of his dollar went for supper and breakfast. In the morning his mind was made up. It was his duty as a man and as a Christian to go home and face the music, and, as he had but sixty cents left, he must walk. And upon his hundred-mile tramp he started forthwith.

On the afternoon of the next day he was wearily plodding along a wood road that led into the town of Wareham, perhaps one half of his journey accomplished. A kind-hearted farmer had given him a fifteen-mile lift in a market wagon, and on a hand car with a section gang he had ridden another ten. These friends in need had evidently regarded him as an eccentric sort of tramp, and the deacon had not attempted to alter this impression. He slept in an open wagon shed.

As he hobbled along in the dust of the road he met a grocery wagon. The driver regarded him curiously as he came up, but Darius had become used to being stared at, and, holding his head down, kept doggedly on. The man on the wagon seat leaned out and stared still more intently. Then he gave a shout.

"Well, I swear!" he ejaculated.

But Mr. Bachelder was past the point where he took an interest in men who were willing to swear. He did not even look up.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" said the grocery man again. "It's him! Hi! Darius! Darius Bachelder!"

Then the deacon did look up and saw the face that had been a hazy vision since that awful day in Boston—the face of Al Small.

"Hey?" he exclaimed wearily.
"Why, why, Mr. Small!"

The sporting grocer leaned back in his seat and laughed at least a year, as Darius was reckoning time. At length he recovered a portion of his gravity and sprang out of the wagon and came over to the worn and haggard figure in the dust.

"How'd you know I'd come home again?" he asked.

"I didn't," said Mr. Bachelder.

"But what are yer doin' here in Wareham, and what made yer clear out and leave me in Burrows' place the way yer did? They told me yer'd gone out and I hunted ha'f a day, but couldn't find no trace of yer. Where'd yer go?"

"I dunno."
"Don't know?"

"I don't know nothin'. Seems's if I was in a trance or somethin'. All I can remember is a feller named Montgomery and some sass'p'rilla and meetin' you somewheres and then wakin' up in a sort of hotel place. My money was all gone, so I started ter walk home."

"Home? Ter East Harniss?"

"Sartin."

"But what did yer walk fer? Yer had ver ticket."

"No. I didn't."

"Yes, yer did, too! I put it in yer hat, so's yer wouldn't lose it. Let me look."

Mr. Small snatched off the dilapidated tall hat from the deacon's head, turned back the leather band inside, and produced a slip of pasteboard.

"There's yer ticket!" he said.

Darius gazed at the card as if hypnotized. Then, all at once, he gave way completely, and, sitting down in the bushes by the side of the road, began to sob like a baby. Mr. Small was greatly taken aback by this performance and

strove to comfort him, but it was some time before the deacon could talk coherently. When he did he blurted out the whole pitiful tale.

"Well, I swear!" exclaimed the dumfounded Al. "So you ain't a sport at all, and them Boston sharps jest worked yer. Well, it's lucky fer you yer got away from 'em or yer'd never have seen yer money again."

"Don't make no odds. They might's well have got it; somebody did. And what'll I say ter the folks at home?"

"Say? Why, say nothin'. I've got yer money. I only borrowed it. Didn't s'pose I stole it, did yer?"

"You've got it?"

"Sure! And a good pile more besides. Blamed if that cash of yours didn't seem to bring me luck! I won over two hundred dollars afore I quit. Ha'f of it's yours, of course." And the lucky grocer with sporting proclivities produced from his pocket a bulky green roll and proceeded to peel off tempting husks from the same.

It was some time before the amazed Mr. Bachelder could be made to realize that all his lost money had come back to him and that his acquaintance intended to present him with much more beside. When he did realize it he positively refused to accept more than the amount—some fifty-five dollars—that he had with him when he left East Harniss.

"I couldn't take more of it," he insisted. "Don't yer see I couldn't? Yer made it gamblin'."

Mr. Small grinned a trifle maliciously and seemed about to make some remark. Whatever it may have been, he changed his mind and said, instead:

"All right if yer say so. Guess I'll have ter make it up ter yer in some other way then. Now jump into the cart there and come on home with me. Yer'll have ter have a new hat and some clean things. Them you've got on looks's if they'd been through the war."

The next morning a far different and much more respectable Darius boarded the morning train at Wareham station. He was going to Boston to buy some books and a bookcase for the pastor of the East Harniss Baptist Church. Mr. Small came to see him off.

"Good-by, Darius," the latter called cheerily, as the train started. "Look out for Mr. Montgomery. By the way, I calc'late I'll have ter send the parson somethin' myself. Got ter git rid of your share of the money somehow."

"No, no, Al!" pleaded the agonized and alarmed Mr. Bachelder. "Don't do nothin' like that! Now yer won't, will yer?"

But Mr. Small only laughed and the train went on.

The books were beautiful; every one said so. So was the bookcase. The deacon was overwhelmed with compliments, which he seemed anxious to

avoid. In the midst of the festivities at the minister's house, Bill Higgins, the station agent, came to the door bearing a large wooden box.

"It's fer Mr. and Mrs. Whyte," he

said. "Come by express."

The box contained a fine silver-plated table service. Everybody gasped with delighted astonishment and expressed themselves as "dyin' ter know who sent it."

"There seems to be no name attached," said Mr. Whyte. "Oh, yes! Here is a card in this sugar bowl."

The sugar bowl was tall and shaped much like an antique loving cup. The clergyman read what was written on the card and said amazedly:

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"Why, this is most astonishing! There is no name here, but it says: "This will be a fine thing to drink sarsaparilla out of."

Deacon Darius Bachelder actually turned green, but nobody noticed it.



Ainslee's

MIDWAY

TRICKED into no meandering paths, misled By no blind alley choked with roses, we Thought only of the narrow road ahead, And a cool terrace looking toward the sea. Shoulder to shoulder down the beaten track. What if our hands met on some windy crest? There was no invitation to turn back; And then a voice one evening whispered: "Rest."

It was in April, and the moon had tossed
Irresolute silver on the world below.
Life is a halfway house, we may be lost!
Who knows, indeed, where any journey ends!
And then the whisper: "Yes, but-even so,
Lovers are lovers there, and friends are friends!"

LESLIE NELSON JENNINGS.



If One Would Be King

By Alison Spence

Author of "Sauce for the Goose,"
"The Devil Must," etc.

THE junior partner of the law firm of Tredwell & Garrison, Mr. Hugh Garrison, knew a very mannish sense of self-satisfaction as he read the cablegram from Nice. So "mad Marta"—or the "immortal Marta," whichever way you happened to be betting her—had come to him at last for favors—she who had declared herelf forever self-sufficient, forever independent of all men, and, most of all, of Mr. Hugh Garrison.

A very simple favor for Garrison to feel satisfaction about, to be sure. In so far as it meant anything to him—or to her, really, in all probability—she might as well have asked him for a light for her cigarette. And as he read the cablegram a second time, his first reaction gave way to that glow of pleasure which always he must feel when Marta Polhemus remembered him enough—yes, even for a light for her cigarette.

The cablegram was this:

Please at any cost, even mortgage my entire life and career, bid in and safeguard against my immediate return number two eighty-five catalogue list Feuchtbar Galleries auction collection Bernhard von Reuss of Plauen. Utmost vital importance. Sailing at once.

And now, after its second reading, Garrison very carefully calculated the time of its sending. Not that the precise hour was of any weight in itself, but only that all things connected with Marta

Polhemus held in themselves importance for him. And he arrived at the conclusion that the message must have been sent—of all unearthly hours—at something after two o'clock in the morning, French time. Mad Marta! Or was it this time the immortal Marta? Well, whichever—— And "sailing at once," though not three months of her year's rest abroad had elapsed. Mad Marta, indeed!

Garrison went no further with his mail. The Feuchtbar Galleries on the telephone! The Von Reuss sale had started the day before. No, No. 285 had not been reached, but would probably be put up toward noon to-day. What was it? An impatient moment's delay for the clerk at the other end to search the catalogue, and then came the description:

A cinquedea, or dagger, North Italian of the fifteenth century, small model, grip with ajouré rosettes, even on metal border of pommel, bears armorer's mark of a Gothic crown with initial B, probably meaning Brescia. Very rare. Recovered from demolition of masonry at Zara in 1805. Perfect condition.

All those words meant nothing to Garrison, except—mad Marta indeed. He put the cablegram aside, now, and ruffled through his mail. What was here? Directors' meeting, trustees' report, conference re consolidation, and so on and so on. Nothing of importance. It was now just past ten.

The item might be reached before noon. The Feuchtbar Galleries were in West Fifty-fourth, just off Fifth. He must give at least half an hour to arriving there.

Tredwell, his senior partner, came in —a wiry gnome of a man, age old yet ageless; wisdom and sagacity and cleverness incarnate, yet almost disembodied.

"Morning, Garrison. Notification that the tobacco-combine case is likely to be called for hearing late this morning. Are you ready?"

"This morning?"

"Yes."

"Have to let a clerk answer, I guess."
Garrison reached for the cablegram.

"Let a clerk answer—that? But——"
"But you see——" And Garrison

gave Tredwell the cablegram.

Tredwell read it in the glance of a

"Oh! Garrison, do you mean that

you are still—mad?"
"You never knew her, Tredwell."

Tredwell snorted.

"Ah, a woman's a woman. I know 'em all. Well, I'll take the hearing, though God knows I'd rather be hanged,

drawn, and quartered than——"
"I know, Tredwell, and thanks very much."

"And if that dashed thing goes at half a million, I suppose you'll buy it in."

"I would, if you'd lend me the money."

"Mad Garrison, instead of mad Marta! Yes, I'll lend it to you, and you know it. Though I'd rather be hanged, drawn, and quartered than show up in any dashed court that— Well, good luck! Let me hear how it comes out." And Tredwell was gone. God bless Tredwell!

Garrison got through some business, so as not to appear too—too mad, if you like, to submit himself to discipline, and reached the Feuchtbar Galleries at a little after eleven. The usual European

collection, imported for an impoverished family's depredation on American purses—armory, enamels, furniture, reliquaries—nothing of any particular beauty in itself. Von Reuss of Plauen was probably no more than a shrewd collector, well expert in American tastes.

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The crowd was mostly women, of all ages and of one type-rich. There were a few men-obvious dilettanti, curiosity seekers, men about town, perhaps, but none whom Garrison could intelligently call connoisseurs. It was a layman's sale of a professional collector's belongings. Of course, into such a collection something might have crept that Marta had heard about as worth while. Garrison was impelled to work through to the desk and ask to examine No. 285, But caution restrained him, had commanded him to buy it in, and it should be bought even if it were a common carving knife. To evince too great an interest in it now might put on his guard some possible rival for possession of the thing and thus throw down the gage of battle before the battle was on.

No. 285 was reached before the recess. It was a dagger. Garrison knew no more than that either from its appearance or from the auctioneer's eulogy.

Some one started it off at twenty dollars. Caution bridled Garrison. He didn't so much as look to see who the first bidder was. His time had not yet come. At sixty dollars the bidding began to lag. Garrison was about to add five to the previous bid when a hitherto unheard voice—and Garrison's well-trained ear told him that it was an Englishwoman's voice, halting and embarrassed—bid seventy. More lagging; more wheedling by the auctioneer.

"Seventy-two," he called, and with a disarming smile turned to see her.

"Seventy-five," came haltingly, and so he located her.

She stood on the edge of the crowd, as if she had but lately entered. He saw athletic stature common to her kind—capable shoulders, small hips, a colorless hat and tailored suit, of which no more could be said because they were so like all others, a face rather ugly, yet somehow illuminated—a woman of perhaps twenty-seven years, certainly not yet thirty. Of a truth a woman not to look twice at, except for that strange, indescribable illumination of her face.

Her eyes met his, a little frightened, questioning, but never defiant.

The auctioneer droned on his plaintive drivel.

"Eighty," said Garrison.

"Eighty-five," said the woman in-

Garrison got the dagger at four hundred and forty. At the last he got sick of the game, and bid by twenties against her cautious fives. He felt a brute, somehow. Until he had gone to the clerk, and got back the change from his yellowback, and received his prize, he dared not meet the woman's eyes.

She was waiting for him as, parcel gripped beneath his arm, he made his way back to the door.

"Sorry, you had never a chance," he told her grimly, aware now that all eyes were upon them both as a result of the unexampled bidding.

"Why did you want it? What possible interest— Who are you?" she had to

"I wanted it because—I fancied it," he said.

She spoke with relief:

"If that is all you want of it, you will let me talk with you of it for a moment, I feel sure."

Garrison was tempted to listen to her. But he recalled that word "safeguard" that had been a part of Marta's cablegram, and resolved to take no chances.

"Sorry," he said, "but it would avail you nothing to discuss it with me."

Then he drew away from her rather

brusquely and returned to his offices. On the way he stopped at the Gibraltar Trust Company, and consigned his precious parcel to his safe-deposit drawer; and for the present ended the affair by sending a cablegram to Marta, telling her what he had done. Thus, at so small a price, he could dismiss the matter from his mind against Marta's return.

Or was the price so small?

Later in the afternoon the English girl came to him in his office. However she had managed to find his address—still, he had seen two or three nodding acquaintances in the auction rooms, and so could guess that finding him had not been difficult. He knew, by some instinct from the switchboard girl's first announcement of her name, that it was she:

"Miss Beatrice Nosworthy."
Well, no harm in seeing her now.

"Let her come in," he said.

Garrison looked first for the illumination of her face as she entered, and found it gone. Good coloring, good skin, yet somehow drab now. She reminded him so much of those better-class English girls who had followed the armies to France, as nurses and dispatch bearers and caisson drivers and what not, and had lost themselves in the spiritual fervor of the times.

"You'll wonder why I came to you like this," she apologized. "But it was so incomprehensible to me that you were unwilling to explain to me back there in the auction rooms."

Garrison faced her across the desk.

"And I much regret that I can make no further explanation now."

"Will you at least listen to me for a little time?"

"With pleasure."

"Now that I know you are a solicitor—lawyer, as you call them here—I begin to fear that you bought the dagger for a client rather than for yourself. Is that true?"

Garrison smiled reproachfully.

"I said I would listen to you with pleasure, but I did not promise to answer your questions."

"Then I know it is true," she said, "and that it is useless for me to make any personal appeal to you. But to your client—will you tell me who he is, so

that I may speak with him?"

"Sorry, no!"

In some outwardly calm yet most impressive manner, she signified her excessive impatience.

"You are maddening with all your precautions," she cried. "One would think that I am—am some dangerous desperado—"

"As if one could think that!"

"Well, then-"

"It is so useless for you to argue, Miss Nosworthy," he said, but rather more gently now. "It is not my personal affair, you must understand," he

added deprecatingly.

She was quick to take advantage of his however slightly greater amiability, and managed to convey an appeal that made Garrison marvel at her. There was something about her—that illumination of her face, the intensity of the moods she made him feel in her, despite her completely placid outward appearance—something that told Garrison a plain tale of the extraordinary urge behind her request and her desire for the dagger.

"Have you yet given the dagger to your client?" she asked with such ap-

peal.

"No." And instantly Garrison wondered lest in that monosyllable he had not let down his guard too far.

Again her relief was evident in the return of that illumination to her face,

"When do you propose to pass it over to him?"

"On demand," he said, crisply this time.

"Oh!"

After that she thought for a mo-

"Then would you be good enough to give him a letter from me?"

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"Yes; I will do that much," Garrison said; and his calculating delay was eloquent of the respect he had for her appeals.

"May I write it now-here?"

"Certainly."

He gave her paper, and made place for her across the desk from him. She wrote hurriedly, as if under some tremendous inspiration. She reviewed what she had written, and gave sign of self-approval. Then she looked at him with introspection.

"Do you mind terribly if I seal it?"

she asked.

"Of course not," he was prompt to reply,

She sealed the letter and gave it to

him without superscription.

"I believe I can trust you to give this to him simultaneously—please, simultaneously—with the dagger itself."

And Garrison, seeing no possible harm in it, gave her his promise.

She went out then, with formal leavetaking. Tredwell, who constantly reminded one of sagacity incarnate, chanced to meet her almost at the door. Tredwell bowed, of course, and then stopped to look after her before he entered Garrison's office.

"Well, Garrison, do you want the half

million?" he bantered.

"Wrong for the first time, Tredwell," Garrison returned. "Out of it for five hundred."

"Oh, really?" Then, after a pregnant sort of pause: "My offer still holds."

"What offer?"

"The half million."

"Meaning?"

"That I don't like this business."

"Any reason in particular?" Garrison asked.

"All of it. If nothing else, then that woman who just went out."

"Do you know her?" Garrison demanded in surprise. "No, but—a man doesn't have to know her. There was Lucrezia Borgia, and there was the daughter of Herod, and there was that woman who just went out."

"You're talking in riddles, Tredwell. How do you connect her with this?" Garrison even laughed a little after that. "If I wasn't sure of your bootleg-

ger--"

"And I suspect I think in riddles, in this particular case. Yet it's with an

astonishing clarity."

"Forget it!" Garrison said after a moment's pause. "The affair's all set-

tled, now."

And, indeed, it seemed to be; and really was dropped until Marta arrived, on the following Friday but one, the hastiest possible journey from Nice. She sent him a radio from Fire Island, requesting him to meet her at the pier. As in all things else, Garrison was her ready slave in this respect, urged, too, not alone by her request, but as well by that curiosity which was unobtrusively yet forcefully growing in him.

It was the immortal Marta, not the mad Marta, who came down the gangway to meet him—that gifted, dazzling, temperamental, but adorable, Marta Polhemus, who for two winters had set New York by the ears in her cycle of French plays, and was hailed by laity and priesthood alike as the sole worthy successor to the traditions of a Duse or a Bernhardt, until that very physical fragility, that had been no small factor in her success, overcame her, and she was forced to seek rest.

Yet here she was again, drawn from her sanctuary on one of her mad caprices, Garrison thought to himself—probably not unlike that one when she had canceled a week's engagement to go to the head of an inundated coal mine to spur a rescuing party on to what afterward appeared a miraculous rescue of imprisoned miners.

Here she was again-tall, fragile, of

a gracefulness incarnate and indescribable; delicate face a trifle sunken, perhaps; her great brown eyes, as always, seeming to see things which other mortals might not see; as distinctive, as little short of bizarre as ever in her clothes, in a traveling coat of amazing vertical stripes that seemed to carry the observer's eye direct to the piquancy of her face, and, revealing nothing of her gown but a high collar of dead black, made one guess very hard, and with unfettered imagination, what on earth the rest might be.

Stewards with bandboxes, stewards with tiny trunks, stewards with traveling bags—a very retinue of them fol-

lowed her.

And there was a man with her—a man as tall as she, but no more, a man of distinguished air and Continental manners, one of those young-old men who, though probably fifty, can safely depend upon the heroic artistry of barber and tailor and haberdasher to lop off a score of years.

Marta caught sight of Garrison.

"Oh, Hugh, I hoped you'd be here."
"Didn't you know I'd be here,
Marta?"

Absently she answered:

"Yes, of course. These tiresome customs things—— Hugh, you will help, won't you?"

No word of introduction yet to the man with her. Garrison accepted the command, stood in line at the chief inspector's desk for the declaration, got inspectors, returned to the "P" section, to find her conversing in French with the man. They broke off their conversation as soon as Garrison approached, and Marta turned to him.

"Hugh, have you in reality got that which I wanted you to get?" she asked in

French.

Garrison was aware of the man's keen scrutiny of him.

"Yes," he replied rather trenchantly. Instinctively he resented the strange man, and even hoped that the man knew it.

"But have you got it here, Hugh?" Marta asked,

"No."

The man was evidently vitally interested in his "no."

sted in his "no."
"But it is safe? In a vault or some

such place?" Marta asked.
"Perfectly." Garrison was a little
ashamed of his own monosyllabic curtness, but the man did irritate him, or

perhaps it was the lack of introduction.

Marta turned to the man.

"Please feel quite easy about it," she said. "Mr. Garrison is completely dependable."

And so much Garrison got for his pains, quite as if he had been a faithful Newfoundland, guaranteed not to bite when he dragged his mistress out of the water.

There was a blank moment for all three of them, devoted only to a quick exchange of glances between Marta and the man. Then Marta spoke to Garrison:

"Hugh, will you be so good as to look after all these things of mine, and see that they are sent to the Meurice? I detest—and, after all, we are in a great hurry to get away from here before—And when you have done, go and get the—the thing—and bring it to me at the Meurice."

From all of which obfuscated command, Garrison gathered that they might possibly be fearing spies or eavesdroppers at least. Oh, well, this day was hers. He accepted the command in civilly concealed resignation, and saw them leave the customs shed.

It was well toward four o'clock that afternoon when finally he got through—too late to get into the bank and his safe-deposit vault to retrieve the dagger, too late even to raise any officers of the bank responsible enough to give him special dispensation. But, after all,

He did stop at his offices for that unaddressed letter which Miss Beatrice Nosworthy had left with him for delivery simultaneously with the dagger. What mattered it if the letter were delivered a little earlier? It might even be of some advantage to Marta, to know that she was not alone interested in the dagger.

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Tredwell was in the offices, and

"So, she has come?"

"Yes."

"And you are going to see her now?"
"Yes." Garrison was in a hurry to get
away, but not that fact alone made him
curt with Tredwell. For his senior
partner somehow made him feel cheap,
as if he were a boy who needed looking
after.

"Where is she?" Tredwell asked, with an almost inexorability.

Garrison's answer was little short of being petulant.

"You do take a tremendous interest in this business. She's at the Meurice."

Garrison snapped with his reply, but waited a moment after it, lest his too immediate departure seem discourteous. But Tredwell appeared to have no more to say.

In the hotel, Marta summoned him without delay to the sitting room of her suite. She was with the man. There were flowers—tremendous, dark-red velvety roses, whose sensuousness furnished vivid contrast to her. Garrison looked first at the man, and knew that the man's return glance carried with it annoyed curiosity that he had come to them empty-handed. As for Marta herself, she had a welcome for Garrison that was at least slightly more cordial than her welcome at the pier had been. She even met him halfway to the door,

in a sudden exuberance of cordiality for

"Hugh, you are good to do all this for us."

"My privilege-"

"And please don't be so formal, I couldn't talk with you at the pier—could we. Giorgio?"

Her practiced use of his first name was no more lost on Garrison, than his sudden inclusion into an intimacy à trois.

Giorgio shook his head in negation, and muttered something about useless risks. Then Marta introduced them.

"Giorgio, you know Mr. Garrison, of course. Hugh, this is Giorgio—Giorgio di Spoleto."

The two men acknowledged one another. Garrison turned to Marta, for there had been a lingering quality in her voice, as if much was left unsaid. And on her face he saw a whimsical anticipation

"You've not heard of Giorgio, of course." She smiled at Garrison.

Garrison knitted his brows. Clearly he was expected to have heard of him, but there was nothing conscious in his memory.

"Sorry-"

"Of course you've not heard of him," Marta supplemented herself, in some fashion triumphantly, and not unlike the speech of a child who cries "April fool" to a pleased victim—except, of course, for that quality of magnificence which was always Marta's. She went on in her triumph:

"He is in reality Giorgio, Prince Palæologue." Another dramatic pause. Garrison finally, by a swift, grateful inspiration, rose to the occasion.

"Oh, yes, I remember, the Byzantine emperors before the fall of Constantinople. The same family, of course."

The man Giorgio nodded. Marta had far more to say, and her voice rang with exultation as never before Garrison had heard it.

"And the real heir to the throne of

Roumelia—dynasty extinct, and he needs only that dagger to establish his right. And then he will be what he should be, what he was born to be—a king."

Garrison broke the silence, and spoke with the slight embarrassment of having two pairs of eyes trained upon him.

"Yes, I know. I—at least I know—have read of—the dynastic troubles of Roumelia. The Palæologues—yes, of course! Amazing, all this!"

Marta cried:

"And the parchment hidden in the handle of the dagger—is it there? Hugh, did you look?"

"No, I didn't look. I didn't know about---"

"No, of course you wouldn't know. And now you see why I couldn't talk more with you at the pier. And now, too, let us look and see whether the parchment is there. You have the dagger, Hugh?"

"Unfortunately not here."

"What?" That single interjection was Giorgio's, or, rather, the prince's.

Garrison dared Marta's eyes, and explained:

"So late at the customs that---"

Marta accepted his explanation.

"Oh, yes, that is too bad. To-morrow morning early. It is quite all right, Giorgio, I can assure you."

The man protested.

"Yes, but there is need of haste, lest some one who wants it—"

Still Garrison couldn't endure the

"Any one who gets that to-night may just as well help himself to the five hundred million dollars on deposit there too——"

"It's perfectly safe, Giorgio."

Giorgio grimaced uneasily, but said no more.

Garrison spoke:

"There is, by the way, another person interested."

"Who?" Giorgio was on his feet with the exclamation. Garrison overlooked him quite, and gave the letter to Marta. She, too, was perturbed, but controlled herself better than the men. She opened the letter and skimmed it over.

"Who is this person? Tell me?"
Marta commanded.

Garrison told her briefly. Giorgio hung upon his words, though no less than Marta.

"Who can it be?" she asked Giorgio, when Garrison had finished.

"I haven't a notion," Giorgio replied.
"What does she write?"

"This," said Marta dramatically; and read:

"To Whoever You Are:

"I shall know who you are, because I can-

not escape knowing.

"Unless you give me at once the parchment which is concealed in the handle of the dagger, I shall kill myself upon your doorstep. And after that I shall be always with you.

"Write or telephone me immediately.

"BEATRICE NOSWORTHY.

"Telephone Montgomery 2564,

"18 Sutton Parkway, N. Y. C."

Marta was the first to speak.

"Giorgio, who and what--- And the

letter sounds convincing."
"Convincing! God!" Garrison exclaimed. "And if you had ever seen

her, Marta."
"I can imagine her," Marta said.

"Thirty, drab, lost—"
"But I can't imagine—" the man

Palæologue began.

Tense silence; then Garrison spoke:

"Tell me about this parchment. What does it mean to you? What can it mean

to her?"

Marta hesitated a moment.

"Tell him, Giorgio. Tell him exactly as you told me."

"But must one advertise—" Giorgio

"You must. You told me; why not him?" Marta commanded him.

"Well, then!" he began. "The parchment is a confession by my great-grandmother of the paternity of her eldest male child—one of the Illyrian branch of the Palæologues. She was to kill herself with that dagger if ever her virtue were impugned on that account. Royal blood, you know, must have its protection. Romantic attachment. It came down through my family by word of mouth. No one of us all cared for the confession until the Roumelian dynasty begins now to die out, and I am next in line if I can prove my connection. We found traces of the dagger, traced it to Plauen, then here——"

"Good heavens," said Garrison in disgust, "you must want to be a king!"

Marta indignantly took up the cudgels for Palæologue.

"Why should he not be? It is his by right and by desert. If there is anything pathetic on earth, it is being kept out of one's proper place."

Garrison interrupted.

"And you would be—king maker?"
"Well——" she defied him, a trace guiltily.

Once more mad Marta!

"Your sense of the romantic," he began, "is highly developed lately." He regretted his speech instantly, however.

The man Giorgio came to her defense by changing the topic.

"But of this English girl—what possible interest—"

Garrison interrupted.

"I shall go and see her. What is her address?"

"You shall not. I command it, Hugh." That was Marta, of course.

"But, Marta, she should be heard, at least." Garrison remonstrated.

"Did I not intrust you with that dagger?" she asked.

"Yes, but—between friends—"
"As your client, you, my counsel—"

she reminded him, more quietly now.
"Nothing else than that?" Garrison asked.

She hesitated.

"As nothing else," she said.

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And, of course, there was nothing for Garrison to say or do after that. Sagacious woman that she was, she had taken the only means to keep him from interfering beyond her commands. He shrugged his shoulders in resignation.

"And what further commands have you to lay upon me in this case, Miss Polhemus?" Garrison inquired—oh, very

asually.

She winced at the "Miss Polhemus;"

but she was mad Marta still.

"Get the dagger as early as possible to-morrow morning, and bring it here to us."

Garrison bowed his assent.

"No, no, not here," the man Giorgio put in.

"Why not here?" Marta asked him.

"That woman—her letter sounds as if she were insane, or——"

"And you are afraid of her?" Marta asked, quite colorlessly.

"No, but—if one would be king,"
Palæologue said, "one must be—at least
—solicitous about one's personal securitv."

Garrison chuckled inwardly, though his face was graven.

Marta was thinking.

"Yes, that's true," she admitted.
"Well, what do you suggest?" she asked
the man.

Palæologue looked at her for a moment.

"Do you mind discussing it in confidence?" he asked, with never a glance at Garrison.

"Perhaps that would be best," Marta Issented. "Hugh, do you mind going now? I shall telephone you to-night, or to-morrow morning early. Are you still at your old apartment?"

"Yes."

Garrison waited for her late into the night, never stirring from his apartment lest he miss her call. And well after midnight she telephoned to him. From her voice he judged, in that quickened sympathy of understanding he had

for her and her moods, that she was in a much-chastened attitude, however emphatic her still-present aloofness from him.

"I have seen the English girl," she said, though as if she were loath to make the confession.

Which fact set Garrison instantly

"Yes? And what-"

"I don't know what. Frankly, I don't But can you come to me here at ten tomorrow morning, and bring the dagger?"

Garrison loved her vastly at that particular moment. There was in her voice an appeal which too rarely he had sensed there, and had wanted too often, for it to be lost on him now in all its poignancy. A flash of his imagination pictured her to him just then as being alone on an ocean rock, with the tide closing in upon her, yet somehow too proud to make an appeal for help—she who was always sufficient unto herself.

He went to her at the designated hour. She was alone when he entered her sitting room. In that first, searching glance he always gave her, he saw in her a self-abasement which she nevertheless was trying to conceal from him under a splendidly well-acted show of amiability and no more than that toward him.

"I must confess," she told him, "that I am very eager to see this dagger. I

suspect vou've looked at it."

Garrison had not, and told her so in a word. He, nevertheless, opened the parcel and handed to her the morocco-covered case that contained the precious piece. She snapped the brass lock back and lifted the cover. The dagger, plainly showing a pristine fineness of workmanship, in spite of obvious traces of the mordancy of time and practical usage, reposed in a padded box made to fit it. Marta's first act was to lift it from its position, and apply her strength to twisting the handle. Unable to accomplish her purpose, she held it out to

Garrison in unexpressed command. He had but little difficulty in unscrewing the handle from the hilted blade. He gave the loosened handle back to her; and at once she drew from it the yellowed parchment which they both expected to find there. She looked the manuscript over with futility of comprehension.

"Can you make anything of it?" she asked.

Garrison, too, puzzled in vain over the strange characters and meaningless words, done upon the surface manifestly with a brush and the thickest of inks.

"I should say," he remarked, "judging from some of the characters, that it might be Slovakian or Slovene. But my linguistic accomplishments—"

"It really doesn't matter much what it says," she broke in thoughtfully. Then, after a space, she went on: "Hugh, you are so comprehending, or something. I've learned very lately—but no matter. Do you think that my—my pride is immeasurable vanity and self-conceit unjustified?"

"Marta!" he exclaimed. "Why—why do you think——" And then his mind clicked abruptly upon the reason for that most extraordinary of all speeches he had ever heard from her. Tredwell! Those precise words old Tredwell had used to him once—perhaps twice—not many times, but enough to remain etched deeply upon his memory, loving Marta as he did. And unconsciously his lips betrayed his thoughts.

"Tredwell!" he exclaimed. "Tred well's been talking with you."

"Did he tell you?" she inquired without interest. "I understood he did not want me to let you know—"

And now he knew the reason for Tredwell's so particularly wanting to know Marta's address. Yet who could be angry with Tredwell-?

"It's all right. It doesn't matter, Marta," he said.

"Will you answer my question, Hugh?"

Garrison sought an answer that might be the truth, and yet might not offend her too grievously. Not easy! And while he sought it, the telephone rang. Marta took the instrument.

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"Let him come up," she said. "But first—get this quite clearly!—first bring up Miss Nosworthy, who is waiting in the lounge for my summons. Do not bring them both up together. I will ring you back, in fact, when I want the Prince Palæologue to come up."

She still looked to Garrison for his answer while she hung up the receiver.

"What you ask me, Marta, is not true," he said, and without any sense of evasion, "not true—fundamentally, at least."

"But superficially?"
"Yes, I think so."

She smiled a little introspectively. "Strange that I should believe it from

you. Or perhaps from circumstances."

There was a rap at the door, and Marta signified to him that he should open it, while she herself put the dagger together again, and snapped the cover down upon it.

Garrison was confronted with Miss Nosworthy, who shrank a little before him, though largely in amazement at finding him here.

Marta, now telephoning to the hotel desk that Palæologue was to be sent up at once, smiled a welcome to the girl. And when Miss Nosworthy had entered, and Garrison had closed the door behind her, Marta said to her:

"As I told you last night, I have no way of telling really which of you is right. I want, for reasons of my own, to apply my own test. Will you take this, and go into my bedroom there, and close the door?"

Miss Nosworthy looked defiant question at her.

"The parchment—is that in the handle?"

Marta shook her head.

"No, it is not. I am keeping that for

myself—for the present. You shall have it, if my test shows me that you should. I promise you that, and—you know that you can trust me, do you not?"

"Yes. But your test-"

Marta responded with all her imperiousness:

"There is no other way than the one I dictate."

Miss Nosworthy surrendered, as every one must to Marta Polhemus. She took the dagger without a word, and went with it into the next room. She had scarcely closed the door behind her, when the man Giorgio knocked. Marta herself let him in.

He looked in ill-concealed displeasure at Garrison, who greeted him with a nod. He found not much more of welcome from Marta than he had from Garrison.

And his first question was the expected one:

"You have the dagger?"

Marta met his eyes.

"No. I haven't it. The English girl has it, in the next room. If you would be king, go in and take it away from her." And she spoke in a voice high enough to carry clearly to the next room.

Palæologue glared at her, then put on the mask of a smile.

"You are jesting with me."

But Marta's face forced him to know that hers was not a jest.

"What I tell you is the truth," she said. "Go in and take it away from her, if you want it. You, a man and a prince, against a girl—""

As if he had been impelled by the driving force of her gaze at him, he walked a step or two toward the door she indicated. But then he stopped, and his fear to proceed was plainly written on his face.

"This is buffoonery. This is—"
"This is a test—nothing more."

Again he walked on, and again he

stopped. And this time he turned resolutely.

"You've no right to submit me to this indignity. After all, I am a Palæologue——"

"If you are, you will go in there and face her. Kings have done more than that."

"I shall not. You are making a laughingstock of me."

"As you will," Marta said unflinchingly. "Either that, or——" She pointed meaningly at the door of exit from her apartment.

Palæologue had but one more minute of indecision.

"This is intolerable for a man of my standing. I bid you farewell." And he went out without so much as a glance from either of them.

There was a smile on Garrison's face when Marta turned to him, but he erased it by effort of will.

"I know," Marta said, "that you have been laughing at me. I rather like it." "I don't understand very much about

it all," Garrison said.

"It is only that I thought he was a coward—began to think so from yester-day. But he has—hurt my pride rather a lot, and I wanted to—retaliate."

Still Garrison was a little in the dark. "But perhaps," he said, although he knew that his statement had no foundation, "perhaps he did not want to—yes, to fight against a woman."

"He didn't mention the fact, did he?"
Marta returned.

"No."

"And if he had been what he said he was, he would have mentioned it. If he had mentioned it, I would have sent you in the next room, in place of the girl," she said over her shoulder, as she went to release Miss Nosworthy.

"Marta!" Garrison said, half laughing, half astounded.

"But you would have been quite safe, I see now," Marta said, and opened the door.

Miss Nosworthy came out instantly. "Is this your test?" she asked.

"It is my test of certain things which I wanted proven," Marta returned. "I would have given you the parchment in any case, I think. You have been most convincing. So—there it is. And do you mind my keeping the dagger itself, to remember all this by?"

"You are amazing," Miss Nosworthy said. "Is this—all you wanted of me?

You are sure?"

Marta gave her the parchment, and signified by going to the door that she preferred to be alone with Garrison now. Miss Nosworthy took the hint.

"You have been very good-" she

began in farewell.

"As if I had been! I have been very selfish," Marta said. "Good-by, dear."

When they were alone, Maria walked past Garrison to the window before she spoke.

"You are puzzled, of course. Hugh."

"Very much."

"About me-or about the incident?"

"About the incident, mainly, I think. I understand what you said about—your

pride."

"Oh, the incident is simple enough. I thought you had guessed that instinctively. Tredwell saw Miss Nosworthy. Both she, and he, knew it would be useless to go to you about it, because you were-how do you say?-counsel for the defendant. Tredwell came to me about it, then. It was all what you call a fake. Palæologue--- Well, the less said about it, the better. But he was most convincing to me-too much so, Hugh. Perhaps because I was away over there-away from you-resting, not occupied-I believed him. He appealed to me through my excessive vanity, through my belief that I might have been—a queen.

"With a Frenchman whom this girl is engaged to marry, and with the German who owned the collection, they made up the trap into which I was to fall—or any woman rich enough to furnish funds. I chanced to be Paleologue's victim."

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Marta," Garrison said.

"No, no, I'm not, or-you aren't dense, Hugh, or never were. The Frenchman, an expert in the sciencewhat is it, the science of manuscripts?oh, yes, diplomatics-made the document himself. Palæologue was to marry the rich woman on the strength of his royal aspirations. The German used the dagger to make it more convincing. The Frenchman told his fiancée-Miss Nosworthy-and she simply wanted to destroy the evidence that sooner or later must be used against him. There is no more to tell than that, except, Hugh, that my- Well, this has nothing to do with the incident."

"You mean, the wound to your

pride?"

"That, and more. I am at least quits with the man Palæologue, or whoever he is. But with you—and Tredwell told me this—I have a long life in which to even things with you, and with myself."

"Marta!"

"Yes, Hugh. You have guessed. I knew it instantly when first I saw you yesterday. Contrast? With him? No, I think not. It is not an affair of reason. You have many, many times told me that you love me. I—if it is abasement—want terribly to abase myself before you. I—love you, Hugh, better than I love myself."



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

THERE are some stories that, like certain memorable women, seem never to grow old. It is true that they bear evidences of having been born a long time ago, and yet there is something implicit within them that glows from their depths like the light of a shaded lamp—a seductive essence, a hypnotic radiance, a compelling spiritual vigor—and casts a bright shroud about them to obscure their antiquity.

It is this lustrous shroud, this aura of persistent vitality that must be the ultimate test of good writing. To patent a story great, it is not enough to observe that a multitude of people have read it with interest while the ink of its first printing is wet. Mere timeliness, the catchy treatment of a topic of the moment, may be enough to make the ephemeral success of a book that is clever or graceful or striking-and not much else. Novelty, too, will sometimes turn the trick, or the violent strokes of a lurid pen. But these elements have by themselves no enduring appeal. Timeliness, of course, goes out of fashion overnight. Novelty by repetition turns to commonplace. And violence, having stimulated, soon wearies and then exhausts.

Then what is it that makes a story good? Nobody knows. For that matter, what is it that makes a woman lovely? Nobody knows that either. The most that can be said is that stories and women are good and lovely by grace of a kind of magic, an indefinable, fundamental quality that we try to convey by the word charm. But what is the good of knowing that, since we can no more produce charm by rule of thumb than we can breathe the spark

of life into a marble effigy? Charm is as inscrutable and spontaneous as life itself. It is the vitalizing principle of beauty; it is the inner mystery of successful art.

It is almost as difficult to recognize true charm as it is to define it. Other qualities may easily be mistaken for it. A cunning journeyman may produce an illusion of the genuine magic that will defy contemporary scrutiny. Over and over again the critics have hailed the dawn of a new genius, only to have posterity give them the lie.

If charm is the touchstone of literary worth, then there is only one way to recognize good writing with fair assurance. And that is to wait and see how long it will endure. For charm is ageless. It never grows stale or old.

This much, however, can be said. A story that will bear reading twice is better than a story whose appeal dies with its closing episode. And a story that will bear ten readings is certainly a candidate for the respectful attention of coming generations.

In the next number of AINSLEE's are nine stories that have stood the test of perennial vitality. Having read them once you will find added pleasure in reading them again.

Here are a few samples.

E. Phillips Oppenheim writes in "Berenice," the novel for November:

No one who even hinted at the doctrine of love without marriage could be altogether respectable. Not that Berenice had done that. Still, she had written of marriage—the usual run of marriages—from a woman's point of view, as a very hateful thing. What did she require, then, of her sex? To live and die old maids, while men became regenerated? It was too absurd.

Nina Wilcox Putnam describes the sudden blooming of her wistful heroine in "The Radiant Lady:"

There in the still depth of the pond was the wast sky . . pulsing with light. A bird soared high, a mere speck placed by the Master Hand to measure infinity by. And mirrored against the whole was the goldenhaired vision which, up to now, none but the secret mirror and candle of Araminta's chamber had known. Cone was the sleek primititle head, the pale face, blanched for fear of impropriety; and, in their stead, a maid uncoiffured, free-throated, garlanded—a thing of beauty flushed with pleasure.

Even in prose, Richard Le Gallienne cannot avoid poetry. There is scarcely a line in his story, "The Rose that Came Every Morning," that is not lyrical. For instance:

Something very like love for her invisible admirer began to grow up in her heart; and as the roses continued to come each morning she watched more and more wistfully for the face that thus kept itself hidden; and the faces that she saw grew to be less and less real to her, and the face she dreamed of to become the reality.

O. Henry needs no introduction. Perhaps you imagine you know all his work by heart. If you do, you will be able to name offhand the title to the story from which the appended delightfully pungent bit is extracted. Do you know the story? It will be in the November issue of AINSLEE'S. Meanwhile, here is the clew to its identity:

"I tell you, Lynn, it's the girls like us on the stage that ought to be pitied. It's the girls from good homes that are honestly ambitious and work hard to rise in the profession, but never do get there. You hear a let of sympathy sloshed around on chorus girls and their fifteen dollars a week. Piffel There ain't a sorrow in the chorus that a lobster can't heal."

Have you ever read "The Introducers," by Edith Wharton? It is packed with piquant ironics—like this:

"I'm Mrs. Bixby's secretary—or Sadie's, I forget which. I merely keep an eye on Sadie's spelling and see that she doesn't sign herself 'lovingly,' to young men."

"And what are your other duties?"

"Oh, the usual things—reminding Mr. Bixby not to speak of her husband as Mr. Bixby, not to send in her cards when people are at home, not to let the butler say, Fine claret,' in a sticky whisper in people's cara not to speak of town as 'the city,' and not to let Mr. Bixby tell what things cost. Mr. Bixby takes the bit in her teeth at times, but Sadie is such a dear, adaptable creature that, when I've broken her of trying to relieve her callers of their hats, I shall really have nothing left to do."

Besides the five stories of which you have just had a foretaste, there are four more equally worthy and equally attractive. They are by William J. Locke, Joseph C. Lincoln, E. W. Hornung, and Rafael Sabatini.

Add to these the final installment of Grace Stair's sparkling romance, "The Benediction of Beauty," to complete the contents of AINSLEE's for November—as notable a collection of fiction as we have ever assembled between the covers of this magazine.



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MRS. CARRIE M. CREMA, Philadelphia, Pa.



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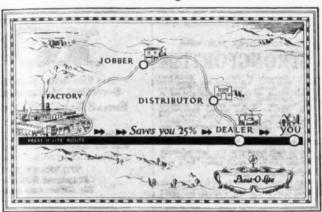
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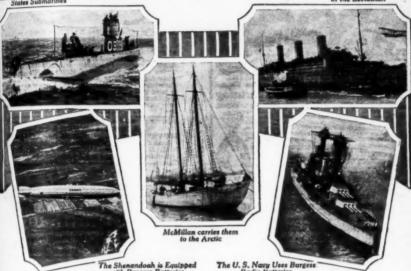
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lesson to her was a

SHE certainly learned something that evening.

And that was: Never to accept an evening's invitation to dance unless she had danced before with the man who asked her.

He seemed very fond of her and almost monopolized her dance program.

By the end of the evening she not only disliked him cordially but he was almost revolting to her.

* * * You, yourself, rarely know when you have halitosis (unpleasant breath). That's the insidious thing about it. And even your closest friends won't tell you.

Sometimes, of course, halitosis comes from some desponsed organic disorder that requires professional advice. But usually—and fortunately—halitosis is only a condition that yields to the regular use of Listerine as mouth wash and gargle. It is an interesting thing that this well-known antiseptic that has been in use for years for surgical dressings, possesses these unusual properties as a breath deodorant. It puts you on the safe and polite side.

and polite side.

Listerine halts food fermentation in the mouth and leaves the breath sweet, fresh and clean. Not by substituting some other odor but by really removing the old one. The Listerine odor itself quickly disappears.

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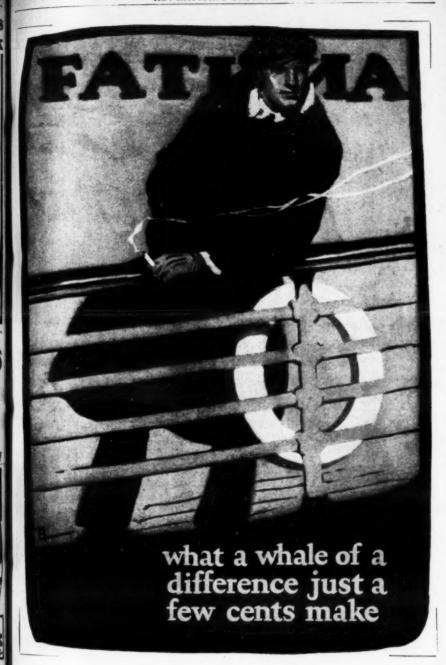
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